

Bullying in the Same-Sex Friendships of Young Adolescent Girls: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract

This qualitative, narrative study explored the bullying experiences of young adolescent girls within their same-sex dyadic and group friendships. The participants were 5 female students, ages 11 and 12 years old, from 1 private, religious school in southern Ontario. Each girl participated in an audiotaped, 30-minute, personal interview based on an unstructured interview protocol. Interview transcripts were analyzed for bullying behaviors using Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes of bullying, including the form, function, and involvement in bullying. Interview transcripts were also analyzed for common and emerging themes using aspects of L. M., Brown and Gilligan's (1992) "Listener's Guide." The findings of this study suggested that within their same-sex friendships girls assume the roles of all participants in bullying, including bullies, victims, bystanders, and bully-victims. The findings also suggested that bullying behaviors within young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships are mainly indirect in their mode of attack and that they are both proactive and reactive. The bully behaviors identified in this study were used to inform the major themes or salient features within the dynamics of girls' same-sex friendships also identified. These themes included acceptance, intimacy, negotiation, inclusion/exclusion, moral character judgements, and power. The findings of this study will be used to inform current theory, personal and professional practice, as well as future research.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

This qualitative, narrative study sought to examine how young adolescent girls experience bullying in their friendships with other girls by exploring the dynamics of girls' same-sex friendships (both one-on-one and group friendships). By highlighting the narratives of young adolescent girls, this study aimed to reveal the types of bullying behaviors that may characterize girls' same-sex friendships. This research addressed the dynamics of girls' same-sex relationships through critical analysis of the relevant literature related to adolescent peer culture, girls' friendships and aggression, and discussion of the educational implications of bullying within girls' friendships, including the provision of a safe space where the friendship experiences of girls, both positive and negative, could be developed and explored.

Background of the Problem

Traditionally, parents, teachers, and educational researchers have viewed adolescent girls' (e.g., age 11 to 18) friendships as fundamentally different from the friendships of their male counterparts (Nolan, 1991). Girls' friendships have been characterized as intimate and supportive on one hand (e.g., L.M. Brown, 2003) as well as "bitchy" and "catty" on the other hand (e.g., Davies, 1979). The dualism indicated by these differing perspectives supports the notion that girls' friendships are both dynamic and complex in nature (Nolan; George & Browne, 2000).

Since the enactment of the Safe Schools Act (Ministry of Education and Training, 2000) in Ontario, and more recently Bill 212 (Ministry Of Education And Training, 2007), an act to amend the Education Act with respect to behavior, discipline, and safety, bullying within the province's schools has emerged as an increasingly pressing issue.

Bullying is a social form of peer aggression commonly occurring in schools (Boyle, 1996). For the purposes of this study, it can be defined as “the abuse of physical and psychological power for the purpose of intentionally and repeatedly creating a negative atmosphere of severe anxiety, humiliation, and chronic fear in victims” (Marini, Spear, & Bombay, 1999, p. 33).

Evidence indicates that bullying in middle childhood is alarmingly high, with about 20% of the school population being involved in bullying on some level (Marini, Bombay, Hobin, Winn, & Dumyn, 2000). In examining the research on school bullying, Smith and Sharp (1994) suggest that figures can fluctuate depending on the method of reporting and the context.

To connect the dynamics of girls’ friendships with bullying behaviors, consider the following excerpt taken from a collection of letters written to children’s novelist, Judy Blume (1986):

Dear Judy,

Please help me with this problem at school. Two kids, Lesley and Donna, are not in a fight with me - it’s a feud. It all started after our school play. Donna promised me that I could help her and Lesley pass out flowers to the teachers. Then they did it without me. This made me mad and I yelled at them.

The next day I discovered that all of my old friends were crossing my name off their notebooks. I was horrified. My whole body felt like Jell-O! What had I done to them? Then I thought, it’s Donna! And it was. I looked at her and she gave me the eye before putting her hands in front of her face to avoid looking at me.

I came home crying and totally miserable. I really wished that I had someone to tell my troubles to. My mother doesn't understand. She says she is sick of this "ganging up" thing, and would I please try to find some new friends. Well, Donna took all my friends away so I tried to talk to my teacher. She said just to ignore them. I tried both ideas for two weeks and they both failed.

I really need help. Last night I was in hysterics. I grabbed at my carpet and screamed very loudly. I thought of running away and also of committing suicide. Sometimes I still feel like doing that. And today was the worst day in my entire life! School was horrible, my sisters and mother wouldn't stop nagging me and I just lay on my bed and screamed. Then I thought of you and I knew you would understand. Please, please help me!

Molly, age 11. (p. 54)

While the above excerpt may appear at first glance to be typical of girls' experiences with friends at school, it does highlight many troubling issues that girls may face in their same-sex friendships. These include situations of conflict, exclusion, rejection, anger, and fear. In particular, the above excerpt highlights some bullying behaviors, such as social exclusion, mean-natured glances, and verbal harassment, which girls may employ in dealing with conflict in their friendships. Furthermore, this excerpt presents some likely responses to bullying behaviors, including confusion, frustration, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, possible suicide, lack of parent concern, and lack of teacher support.

Marini, et al. (2000) suggest "a lack of understanding of basic conflict resolution strategies increases the likelihood that once a conflict develops, the resulting interaction

will follow a dysfunctional pathway, from Conflict to Aggression to Violence” (p. 2).

By following the list of issues that emerge in succession from this letter, it is easy to see how conflict (rejection/a fight with friends/anger) can lead a child to react with aggression (verbal harassment/social exclusion), leading to emotional instability (confusion/fear/anxiety), which may then escalate into violence (possible suicide).

Unfortunately, situations of conflict within girls’ friendships can follow this dysfunctional pathway. Thus, a deeper understanding of the dynamics of girls’ same-sex friendships with regard to bullying behaviors is necessary. By identifying how girls experience and handle bullying in their same-sex friendships, this knowledge may assist in the development of healthy conflict resolution strategies that will support girls within their friendships.

Statement of the Problem

The problematic nature of bullying in Canadian schools has been firmly established by the research community (see Craig, Pepler, & Atlas, 2000; Hawkins, Pepler, and Craig, 2001; Marini et al., 1999; Hobin, 1997; O’Connell, 1997). Marini et al. (2000) suggest that bullying is “one of the most destructive and underrated social problems of childhood” (p. 4). Thus, the need for proactive strategies to protect and educate children in Canada’s schools is apparent.

Although physical and direct aggressions within bullying have been addressed to a large degree within the research community, psychological and indirect aggressions have not received the same attention (Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992). Cross-cultural evidence shows that indirect aggression is commonly employed by adolescent females in

the school setting (Osterman, Bjorkqvist, & Lagerspetz, 1998). However, there remains a lack of educational research into female aggression in schools.

Researchers have examined various aspects of gender differences in aggression and bullying (see Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick, 2000; Knight, Fabes, & Higgins, 1996; Smith, Cowie, Olafsson, & Liefhoghe, 2002). However, although research into female aggression has increased since the 1990s, overall, it is far less investigated than male aggression (Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992). Although developmentalists have examined girls' emotions and behavior within in their same-sex relationships (e.g., L. M. Brown, 2003; Goodwin, 2002), the concept of female bullying is a relatively unexplored area within educational research, with few studies focused on the experiences of bullying from the perspectives of young adolescent girls.

For the most part, previous research regarding peer victimization or bullying has focused on the larger peer context, specifically the aggressive acts of children's classmates (Crick & Nelson, 2002). Crick and Nelson suggest the importance of research focused on victimization in dyadic peer relationships, such as friendship, because these contexts may either ameliorate or exacerbate a victimized child's vulnerabilities. In particular, given the importance that girls place on establishing close, dyadic friendships in middle childhood, they suggest that relationally aggressive behaviors may be especially disturbing for girls because they threaten the closeness and security of their relationships. Within educational research, there is a lack of studies that examine bullying within the context of girls' friendships.

To better understand the social phenomenon of bullying, both the positive and negative sides of girls' friendships require examination. Although the dynamics of girls'

friendships have been explored in the research literature (see George & Browne, 2000; Goodwin, 2002; Nilan, 1991), the current body of educational research requires further exploration of the dynamics of girls' relationships, with specific regard to the victimization that may occur in girls' same-sex, dyadic friendships and peer groups.

Purpose of the Study

This qualitative, narrative study explored how young adolescent girls may experience bullying in their same-sex friendships. By highlighting girls' friendship narratives, this study also examined the dynamics of girls' same-sex friendships (both dyadic and peer group). The main research question answered in this study was: How do young adolescent girls experience bullying in their same-sex friendships? Stemming from this main question were three supporting questions:

1. How do young adolescent girls establish and maintain their same-sex friendships?
2. What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors characterize young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships?
3. How do young adolescent girls negotiate conflict within their same-sex friendships?

Rationale

My interest in female bullying stems from my experiences as a grade 7, mathematics teacher at a middle school overseas. What I witnessed and experienced there was frustrating at best and disturbing at worst. As my first school year overseas progressed, I noticed that many girls avoided the cafeteria and the playground during the lunch hour. Girls would frequently ask to eat lunch in my classroom. They would

promise to sit quietly in my classroom as long as I did not force them to comply with the school rule that required their class to spend the last half of the lunch hour outside.

During class, I could see the shifting allegiances among the girls, as they would exclude individuals from the group on varying occasions. There were incidents of verbal harassment, gossip, false rumors, threats of violence, and eventually these incidents escalated into physical fighting among the girls.

Over time, girls who were the repeated targets of these attacks began to miss school frequently. One student complained of stomach aches and often did not eat lunch. Another student's mother sought psychological counselling for her daughter and tried to have her placed in another school. Yet another student's grades fell so dramatically that she was at risk for repeating the year. On the surface these incidents seemed unrelated, but the common thread in all of them was that, when questioned about their relationships, all of the girls in this particular group considered themselves to be friends.

Unfortunately, our school had no strategies in place to deal with bullying within the context of friendship. The school board's code of conduct outlined various behaviors that were considered to be bullying or harassment; however, the rules pertained to direct behaviors that were usually physical or verbal in nature. Therefore, teachers were left to their own devices. Most teachers chose to ignore incidents that occurred in the hallways or schoolyard. Situations in the classrooms were not taken seriously and dealt with lightly. At staff meetings the phrase, "They're just being girls" was frequently repeated.

As a young, new teacher, I felt intimidated by the complexity of the situation and powerless to effect any real change. The administration dealt with bullying only when it

had reached the level of physical violence. At times, I felt as if I were the only teacher who noticed the problems our female students were having.

In staff meetings I would plead with my more experienced colleagues, “There must be something else we can do!” Usually my remarks were met with indifference because my colleagues were just as confused as I. However, being the sole advocate was too much for me. My voice was being ignored, and I just could not break the silence. At the end of my second school year, I decided to take a break from the classroom and resigned from my teaching position. This allowed me the time to pursue graduate studies in hopes of finding the answers to my questions.

Olweus-based intervention programs (Olweus, 2001), aimed at bully-proofing schools, usually target overt and direct bullying behaviors such as pushing, hitting, kicking, and punching (L. M. Brown, 2003). However, covert and indirect behaviors, such as manipulation, social exclusion, and rumor spreading, are often overlooked because they are difficult to detect and address. Thus, the prevalence of female bullying may not be reflected in current figures on bullying, and current intervention programs may not adequately address the issues surrounding bullying in girls’ same-sex friendships.

Importance of the Study

The present study carries theoretical significance because it extends the current body of knowledge on female bullying from a qualitative, educational perspective. It also gives initial insights into bullying within girls’ friendships. This study is significant to educational stakeholders because it provides insight into the salient issues within female bullying. Additionally, it may provide empirical support for the development of

educational prevention and intervention strategies that specifically address the friendship needs (social, emotional, psychological, etc.) of young adolescent girls in schools.

Addressing bullying within girls' same-sex friendships may have potential benefits for many educational stakeholders. An understanding of girls' experiences of bullying within their same-sex friendships, along with extended knowledge of the dynamics of girls' same-sex, dyadic friendships and peer groups, may aid in the development of proactive strategies that will produce safer schools in line with the Safe Schools Act (Ministry of Education and Training, 2000) and Bill 212 (Ministry Of Education And Training, 2007). It is my hope that this study will emphasize the importance of addressing bullying within girls' friendships among students, parents, educators, and school administrators.

Olweus (2001), a seminal researcher in the area of school bullying, states:

It is a fundamental democratic or human right for a child to feel safe in school and to be spared the oppression and repeated intentional humiliation implied in peer victimization or bullying. No student should be afraid of going to school for fear of being harassed or degraded, and no parent should need to worry about such things happening to his or her child. (pp. 11-12)

Consistent with Olweus (2001), the Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1 to 8 emphasizes personal safety and injury prevention within the healthy living strand of the Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education and Training, 1998).

The curriculum document states that:

Personal safety and injury prevention are essential components of the healthy living strand. Education in these areas is critical for reducing children's injuries.

Personal safety topics include bullying, peer assault, child abuse, harassment, and violence in relationships . . . The expectations address the knowledge and skills needed to reduce safety risks at home, at school, and in the community.

Students will become familiar with the support available to them within the family as well as with the agencies and services that provide support and help within the community. However, knowledge alone is not enough; students require the necessary skills to respond appropriately to situations that threaten their personal safety and well-being. Living skills such as conflict resolution, assertiveness, resistance and refusal techniques, and decision-making will help them respond to situations effectively. (pp. 11-12)

This study supports the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education and Training, 1998) in that it allows girls to reflect on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize their friendships. This may help girls better identify situations that threaten their personal safety by encouraging increased personal and social awareness with regard to how girls treat each other within their friendships and by allowing girls to reflect on the ways in which they handle conflict within their friendships. Furthermore, by reflecting on the ways in which they negotiate conflict, this study may assist girls in identifying appropriate conflict resolution and coping strategies which support the development of living skills as outlined in the Ontario Health and Physical Education curriculum. Finally, participation in this study may help to legitimate the experiences of young adolescent girls and empower their voices by allowing girls to speak about and reflect on their friendship experiences.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is bounded by place and time. This study was conducted in a private, religious school in southern Ontario; therefore, participants were held to an external moral standard as dictated by the school rules, which may have influenced their behavior. Because the school accepted students in grade 7, all of the participants in this study were new to the school and had known each other for only a short period of time. This helped give insight into how the participants established and maintained their friendships.

This study is limited in that it examined girls' same-sex friendship and its connections to bullying by attending to the voices of girls only. No parent, teacher, administrator, coach, or any other adult voices were used as sources of information. While the voices of these others are important to the overall picture of girls' friendship and female bullying, accounts from adults regarding girls' experiences of friendship may be skewed by their position or relationship to the girls. Within the scope of this study, I considered girls as the experts or gatekeepers to the direct experiences of friendship; thus their voices were most important to me as the researcher.

This study assumed language competency across the participants. Due to the linguistic skills required to participate in an interview and the requirements of narrative research that the richness or detailed account of a story be preserved, all of the participants in this study were assumed to possess competency in English as their first language.

As a researcher, I acknowledged my personal experiences with bullying and friendship that may have entered this study. Particularly because my interest in this topic

was based on my personal experiences, the way in which I listened to the participants and analyzed their stories was influenced by my perceptions as the researcher.

Responses from the participants in this study may have been influenced by social desirability. That is, many behaviors common in female bullying, such as spreading false rumors and gossiping, are considered to be socially unacceptable. Thus participants may have been less likely to admit to these behaviors. Participants may have tended to give responses that would give me, as the researcher and an adult, a positive impression of their thoughts, behaviors, and feelings even if the situation they described could be perceived as negative.

The scope of this study is limited in that it examines the same-sex friendships of girls at a time when evidence suggests that girls' opposite sex friendships may increase in number (see Connelly, Goldberg, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Although victimization in girls' opposite-sex friendships warrants examination, for the purposes of this study I chose to focus on girls' friendships with each other because they were of more interest to me as the researcher and to address the need for further research within educational literature. Due to my experiences as a middle school teacher, I felt that including only the intimate same-sex friendships of girls was sufficient to answer my research questions and to lend value to my own educational practice.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter provides a critical review of the relevant research literature related to girl's friendships and bullying. This chapter is divided into five parts. To highlight the social phenomenon of bullying within the context of girls' same-sex friendships, this chapter first examines the peer culture of adolescents. Second, it explores girls' friendships, followed third by girls' aggression, both with respect to female bullying. Fourth, this chapter discusses some educational implications of female bullying. Finally, some conclusions and discussion of the present study are offered.

Bullying

Bullying is a social form of peer aggression commonly occurring in schools (Boyle, 1996). For the purposes of this study, it can be defined as "the abuse of physical and psychological power for the purpose of intentionally and repeatedly creating a negative atmosphere of severe anxiety, humiliation, and chronic fear in victims" (Marini et al., 1999, p. 33). According to Marini, McWhinnie, and Lacharite (2004), "bullies tend to exert their 'power' in a large number of domains, including, physical strength, social influence, and emotional intimidation" (p. 18).

According to Marini and Dane (2008), bullying is still a major social issue is both school and society at large. Furthermore, they suggest that understanding and preventing bullying is difficult because bullying may be more complex and multifaceted than originally believed. Pointing to this complexity, Marini and Dane suggest that there are several subtypes of bullying, which are characterized by the different types of behaviors manifested. Marini and Dane first suggest that the form of bullying be considered. Bullying may be direct, such as punching or name calling, or indirect, such as rumour

spreading or social exclusion. Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen (1992) suggest that both direct and indirect aggressive behavior peak at age 11, especially for girls. Additionally, Bjorkqvist (1994) identified early adolescence as a period when girls' friendships and peer relations show a sharp increase in indirect aggression.

Second, Marini and Dane (2008) suggest the function of bullying requires consideration. Bullying may be proactive, involving planned aggression that is reward driven, or reactive, involving defensive or emotional responses to being provoked. Salmivalli and Neiminen (2002), who used peer and teacher reports to examine proactive and reactive aggression among school children aged 10 to 12, suggest that proactive and reactive aggression are somehow connected. In studying the aggressive behavior of school bullies, victims, and bully-victims, Salmivalli and Neiminen found that bully-victims were the most aggressive of all bullying participant groups. Additionally, they noted that bully-victims employed both proactive and reactive aggression according to their peers and teachers. Bullies were the second most aggressive group. However, the researchers identified aggressive subtypes among children who were identified as bullies, including those who were reactive-only, proactive-only, and proactive-reactive children. Victims, who Salmivalli and Neiminen hypothesized would be nonaggressive, were found to be more reactively aggressive than the control children according to peer and teacher reports. In contrast to this finding, victims were found to be similar to control children for proactive aggression scores. Further peer-reported findings demonstrated that a lack of proactive aggression and the presence of reactive aggression predicted a child's likelihood of being a victim of bullying.

Finally, the type of involvement in bullying requires examination. Marini et al. (2004) suggest that participants in bullying situations are diverse in character and may include bullies, victims, bystanders, or bully-victims. Victims, who are the targets of bullying, are often powerless in bullying situations because their voices are silenced and devalued by others. Bystanders, or those who observe bullying, according to Marini et al., are the largest group of students in situations of bullying. Bully-victims, as identified by Marini, Dane, Bosacki, and YLC-CURA (2006), are students who report involvement in bullying as both bullies and victims. Thus, bullying can be considered to be a complex, multirole, social process.

Female Bullying

For the purposes of this study, female bullying refers to acts of bullying where girls are both the perpetrators and the victims. Girls may or may not act as bystanders in situations of female bullying. Within the body of research on female aggression, many terms have been used to refer to the behaviors that have been characterized as female bullying (see Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Galen & Underwood, 1997).

Simmons (2002), in her popular work on female bullying entitled *Odd Girl Out*, refers to a hidden culture of aggression in girls. To focus her analysis, Simmons took the three subtypes of aggression most common in females (relational, indirect, and social) and classified them under one term: alternative aggressions. This term refers to the aggressive behaviors girls employ that fall outside the conventional research definitions of aggression. Simmons suggests a need within the body of research for a term that encompasses all typically female forms of aggression. Additionally, Archer and Coyne

(2005), in reviewing existing aggression research, concluded that indirect, relational, and social aggressions are essentially the same form of aggression. However, for the purposes of this study, an understanding of each subtype is necessary so that specific bullying behaviors within girls' friendships can be identified. While the distinctions between each of these definitions may not be clear, their similarities point to the complexity of female aggression and the difficulty researchers encounter when trying to identify types of bullying.

Relational Aggression

Relational aggression refers to hostile acts that harm others by damaging (or threatening to damage) their relationships or feelings of social inclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). For example, threatening to end a friendship unless a peer complies with a specific request is relationally aggressive.

Indirect Aggression

Indirect aggression refers to behavior in which the bully, using social manipulation, can harm the victim without direct contact (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992). Through covert behavior, the perpetrator makes it seem as though there has been no intent to harm at all. Using other people as vehicles to spread a false rumor is an example of indirect aggression.

Social Aggression

Social aggression refers to behaviors that are intended to damage a target's self-esteem, social status, or both (Galen & Underwood, 1997). It includes indirect acts, such as rumor spreading or social exclusion, and direct acts, such as verbal rejection.

Peer Culture of Adolescents

According to Corsaro and Eder (1990), peer culture refers to “a set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers” (p. 197). For most adolescents, time spent with friends is the most important part of school because interactions that form the basis of their culture occur in their friendship groups (Corsaro & Eder). The peer group provides adolescents with both emotional and social support (B. Brown, 1990; Johnson & Roberts, 1999). Additionally, the role of peer friendships, as sources of activity, influence, and support, increases greatly during adolescence (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). Both peer relationships and involvement in peer group activities support healthy adolescent development (Loder & Hirsch, 2003).

Evidence suggests that during middle childhood, children’s friendships are largely with their same-gender peers (Parker & Asher, 1993). This tendency to interact with same-gender partners continues into preadolescence (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1987), although friendships with the opposite-sex and the emergence of romantic relationships begin to increase during early adolescence (Connelly et al., 1999; Hartup, 1983).

During adolescence, children develop increasingly sophisticated cognitive and social skills (Underwood, 2003). Underwood suggests that these increased skills may help adolescents cope with difficult social situations; however, they also allow adolescents to engage in more complicated means of hurting each other. Beginning in childhood and continuing into adolescence, Azmitia, Kamprath, & Linnet (1998) suggest that children expect that their friends will provide companionship, help, protection, and support. However, many changes in the peer group occur during early adolescence

which may jeopardize these expectations, especially for girls (Hartup, 1983). These include increases in friendship intimacy and conformity with peers.

According to Sullivan (1953), intimacy refers to all features of a friendship that make it seem close or intense and encompasses two related but distinct aspects. The first aspect is intimate self-disclosure, which involves sharing personal or private thoughts and feelings with friends. The second aspect is actual knowledge of a friend's personal and private information. Research evidence suggests that intimate friendships first arise in early adolescence (see Berndt, 1982 for a review).

Berndt (1982) found that when children and adolescents are asked open-ended questions such as "What is a friend?" or "How can you tell someone is your best friend?" comments related to intimacy increased dramatically between middle childhood and early adolescence. According to Berndt, this finding suggests that compared with younger children, young adolescents know more intimate information about their own friends and have more concern about intimate self-disclosure to friends.

According to Underwood (2003), during early adolescence the role of the peer group increases in importance, as children strongly value acceptance by their peers. As a result, young adolescents engage in more behaviors (both prosocial and antisocial) that show conformity to the expectations of their peers. Conformity will gain them acceptance from their peers, and acceptance, in turn, helps them maintain control over the changes in their emotional and social worlds. A key area of conformity for young adolescents is in the area of gender roles, as young adolescents adhere more closely to gender expectations (L. M. Brown, 2003). That is, boys become more stereotypically masculine and girls more feminine. Consistent with Hill and Lynch's (1983) gender-

intensification hypothesis, during adolescence girls experience an acceleration of gender socialization (L. M. Brown). As they experience puberty and its associated changes, and as they expand their social worlds (i.e., move to bigger schools and begin dating), Hill and Lynch suggest that parents hold girls to higher standards of achievement and behavior than they do boys. For example, parents may expect girls to comply with their demands more often than boys, and they set higher academic goals for girls versus boys. In response to these changes and expectations, girls conform to gender stereotypes more strictly, especially in early adolescence.

Girls' Friendships

Research suggests that friends can have an important influence on adolescent behavior and development (Savin-Williams & Berndt, 1990). The original hypothesis that intimate friendships have positive effects on adolescents' psychological development can be attributed to Sullivan (1953). In agreement with Sullivan, L. M. Brown, Way, and Duff (1999) suggest that positive experiences of friendship and peer relations greatly influence cognitive, social, and moral development as well as psychosocial adjustment. Although close friendships have been characterized as "the most rewarding and satisfying of all human relationships" (Savin-Williams & Berndt, p. 277), evidence suggests that a different, more problematic side of friendship exists (see Berndt, 1982; Hartup, 1983 for a review). For example, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqvist, and Peltonen's (1988) study of Finnish boys and girls suggested that "the social life of 11- and 12-year-old girls is more ruthless and aggressive than has been suggested by previous research . . . [and] gives a rather cruel picture of the social life of girls" (p.413). The duality between the positive and

negative aspects of friendship points to the dynamic and complex nature of these relationships (George and Browne, 2000; Nilan, 1991).

According to L. M. Brown et al. (1999), in early adolescence, girls prefer intense, one-on-one relationships and become more concerned with the characteristics or qualities that their friends possess, such as their values and beliefs. A central feature of adolescent girls' friendships is intimacy (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; L. M. Brown et al). However, the desire for intimacy is not without cost because girls cannot enjoy the intimacy of friendship without choosing between being themselves and meeting the expectations of others. As L. M. Brown (2003) emphasizes, "girls are pressed to give up their own voices in the service of others or to align with a dominant culture that effaces or renders marginal their cultural values and experiences" (p. 104).

L. M. Brown (2003) suggests that:

Girls' relationships are more intimate than boys'; they are also more painful and difficult. Finding a peer group and fitting in is perhaps the most important achievement of early adolescence. Having a safe place or home in a social scene saturated with possibilities, anxieties, and daily flux offers girls a sense of security and power. (p. 104)

In exchange for this intimacy and security, Brown suggests that girls relinquish their voices and personal power, choosing to care about relationships and to avoid conflict. Giving up their voices in exchange for intimacy and security is what motivates girls' relational aggression (L. M. Brown). Furthermore, research has identified early adolescence as a period when girls' friendships and peer relations show a sharp increase

in indirect (Bjorkqvist, 1994) and relational aggression (Grotzinger & Crick, 1996), thus lending support to Brown's ideas regarding girls' relational aggression.

Findings from Nilan's (1991) longitudinal study of adolescent girls' friendship groups suggest that basic assumptions of trust and honesty exist within friendship regardless of age, gender, or social class. In analyzing the friendship narratives of adolescent girls, Nilan found that the characteristics of unity, empathy, solidarity, loyalty, and mutual support emerged repeatedly as girls described what it was to be friends with other girls whether one-on-one or in a group. Furthermore, issues of fairness, truthfulness, and modesty arose repeatedly in the group-constructed narratives as girls discussed specific events in their friendship groups.

According to Nilan (1991), an underlying moral and social order exists within girls' friendships. In particular, Nilan suggests that girls' friendships can be partially explained as accomplishments within a mutually understood moral order which emphasizes caring, trust, and loyalty. This moral order requires that girls continually prove to each other that they can meet the moral requirements of friendship, particularly the moral obligation to show caring.

Within their peer groups, Nilan (1991) suggests that girls "test" each other on the moral conventions of friendship, such as fairness, truthfulness, and modesty. For example, a girl's peers making up an untrue story to catch her in a lie would be considered a test of truthfulness. Inclusion by their peers is awarded to those girls who are successful in terms of the moral order. That is, those girls who pass a test are included in the peer group. Exclusion by their peers is a consequence given to those girls

who fail a test and transgress the moral conventions of friendship. Thus, Nilan observes that girls cannot afford to be careless when dealing with other girls.

In analyzing girls' talk, Nilan (1991) refers to the dual processes of inclusion and exclusion as categorization. When girls spoke of another girl or group as belonging to a category other than their own, they created a verbal form of exclusion. Nilan concluded that this categorization emphasizes the internal cohesion of the group to which the speaker belongs while simultaneously defining the characteristics of those who do not belong to her group. However, Nilan does not assume that these conventions are universal or cross-cultural but rather that they are culturally specific and affective in nature. Nilan concluded that the processes of inclusion and exclusion maintain order in the social world of girls by satisfying their need to explore the dynamics of interpersonal relationships.

L. M. Brown (2003), whose work supports the ideas of Nilan, asserts that labeling or categorizing peers gives young adolescents a sense of control in the midst of trying to decipher the mixed messages sent by the culture. Because adolescent girls become increasingly concerned with the qualities of their friends, such as their beliefs and values, as they grow older (Youniss & Smollar, 1985), and because the culture tends to label girls as good or bad in terms of adhering to gender expectations, young adolescent girls seem more vulnerable to this labeling by their peers (L. M. Brown).

According to L. M. Brown (2003), young adolescent girls spend much of their time and emotional energy trying to behave in ways that will earn them the best labels. Any deviation from their peers' expectations or, in other words, what is judged by their peers as "normal" or the status quo, can result in exclusion or punishment by the peer

group. For example, being too smart or smarter than the smartest member of the group, too fat or fatter than the fattest member of the group, too sexually experienced, or too full of themselves compared to and as labeled by their peers, can have disastrous consequences for girls' friendships (L. M. Brown).

With similar findings to the work of Nilan, Goodwin (2002) carried out a 3-year, ethnographic analysis of language practices in preadolescent girls' (10–12 years old) peer groups. Goodwin notes that for girls, talking is an important activity. Girls use language to establish close friendships.

Goodwin (2002) found that girls formed social alliances against particular individuals to establish exclusiveness in their peer groups. Furthermore, to sanction or punish members of their peer group when they attempted to show themselves better than the others, girls employed various processes of exclusion. These exclusionary behaviors were exhibited using a variety of means such as exchanging secretive comments and cryptic gestures in the presence of the target, talking about the target in her absence, excluding the target from play, and yelling insults at the target from afar. Interestingly, Goodwin notes that these behaviors were used amongst girls who considered each other to be close friends, accepted each other as members of the group, and treated each other as equals.

Conversely, Goodwin (2002) notes that girls' used the term "tagalong", a person defined by her marginal status, as someone who tried to join the group but was not accepted by the group members. Forms of exclusion were also used to sanction or punish the tagalong. These behaviors included yelling personal insults (e.g., "You're ugly!"),

degradation or being made to go last or assume the least important role during play, and deliberate exclusion from play.

Goodwin (2002) concludes that “forms of social exclusion and aggression in girls call into question the notion that girls’ groups are fundamentally interested in cooperative interaction and a morality based on the principles of relatedness, care, equity and responsibility” (p. 411).

L. M. Brown (2003) suggests that finding another girl to tease, reject, or gossip about is a way for girls to measure their worth in comparison to others. It allows them to calm their fears surrounding not fitting in and is a way for them to keep their reputations untarnished by placing the bad parts of femininity on other girls. This behavior is also a way for girls to maintain their friendships and establish consensus.

Despite evidence that girls use teasing, gossip, and exclusionary practices in establishing and maintaining their friendships, this behavior does not apply to girls globally and is deeply rooted in culture, class, and ethnicity. L. M. Brown (1998), in examining girls’ relationships and feelings of anger, found that relationally aggressive behavior seems to be more common among White, middle class girls in the United States versus working class girls of color or White working class girls. Furthermore, Lamb (2001) found that compared to White American girls, Latino and African American girls seemed to possess a more realistic view in acknowledging their negative feelings and actions within their relationships.

Girls’ Aggression

As one of the seminal researchers in aggression research, Buss (1961) suggested two dichotomies in the modes of aggression: physical versus verbal and direct versus

indirect. These labels have been widely accepted on a theoretical level; however, until recently most research has employed only the physical versus verbal dichotomy in the operationalization and measurement of aggression (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992). As a result, this research may have presented a one-sided view of aggressive behavior.

With respect to gender differences in aggression, evidence suggests that, in general, males use more physical aggression than females (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974). Additionally, Lagerspetz et al. (1988) suggested that indirect aggression is used more by females than males, especially for 11- to 12-year old school children. Bjorkqvist and Niemela (1992) suggest that because most aggression research prior to the early 1980s sampled only males and excluded most of the female population, direct aggression (i.e., male aggression) was classed as normal, while other forms of aggression (i.e., female aggression) were ignored or labeled as abnormal. Furthermore, they suggest that this research employed methodologies that led researchers to conclude that females were disinclined to aggression and thus female aggression did not exist or, if it did, its small amount did not warrant significant attention.

A turning point in the study of female aggression came with the introduction of an unprecedented study of adolescents by a group of Norwegian researchers (Bjorkqvist & Niemela, 1992). This study employed peer nomination via a 5-point scale rating of direct and indirect aggression administered to aggressors and victims in separate versions. Students rated every other member of their class as well as themselves. The study confirmed that girls express their anger in ways different from those of boys (i.e., indirect aggression) and that they are not antiaggressive or disinclined to aggression in general. A

form of aggression unique to females existed. Bjorkqvist and Niemela concluded that cultural rules deem overt aggression in females as negative and undesirable, leading girls to engage in covert, nonphysical forms of aggression.

Since the time of this study, investigation into the more subtle types of aggression that girls may exhibit has expanded. Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, and Kaukiainen (1992) suggest that both direct and indirect aggressive behavior peaks at age 11, especially for girls. Vaillancourt (2005) suggests that most studies have reported that the use of indirect aggression is more common among females than males. More recently, Vaillancourt, Miller, Fagbemi, Cote, and Tremblay (2007, p. 316) suggest that “the current level of ‘understanding’ of indirect aggression is quite limited in comparison to what is known about physical aggression.” Their longitudinal research of the developmental trajectories of indirect aggression in Canadian children aged 2 to 10 found that girls used indirect aggression more than boys at each age examined. Additionally, Vaillancourt et al. found that for girls, physical aggression may be replaced by indirect aggression. While this research supports previous notions that indirect aggression is used more commonly among girls, it is mainly quantitative in approach. Methodologies that are qualitative in approach, such as observation, personal interviews, and focus groups, allow for a wider definition of aggression that gives forms of aggression more common to females the opportunity to emerge (see Goodwin, 2002; Owens, Slee, & Shute, 2001).

Research does suggest that boys engage in physical aggression more than girls (see Coie & Dodge, 1998; Knight et al., 1996). However, some researchers argue that if forms of aggression more common in females are considered, in addition to those common in males, girls may be equally as aggressive as boys (see Bjorkqvist, 1994;

Crick & Rose, 2000). Vaillancourt, Hymel, and McDougall (2003), as part of a larger longitudinal study, conducted self-reporting and peer nomination tests with Canadian children from grades 6 to 10. They found that the use of relational aggression decreased for both boys and girls between elementary school and high school. Additionally, their study found that female bullies were viewed as more relationally aggressive compared to male bullies but reported higher intimacy with peers compared to male bullies.

Girls' Anger

According to Simmons (2002), early aggression research reinforced the societal notion of the “good girl”. The good or perfect girl, as referred to in the work of L. M. Brown and Gilligan (1992), is described as:

The girl who has no bad thoughts or feelings, the kind of person everyone wants to be with, the girl who, in her perfection, is worthy of praise and attention, worthy of inclusion and love . . . The girl who speaks quietly, calmly, who is always nice and kind, never mean and bossy. (p. 59)

According to Simmons, good girls are not expected to experience anger because aggression jeopardizes a girl’s ability to be caring and nice and endangers her relationships with others. Furthermore, aggression undermines who girls have been raised to become, that is, caregivers providing unconditional love and care for their families, whose primary goal is the daily supervision and health of their family members.

Current perspectives on female aggression challenge the sugar and spice image of female youth by suggesting that the “good girl” does not really exist; and, that if she does, she is not always as good as everyone expects her to be (e.g., L. M. Brown, 2003; Lamb, 2001; Underwood, 2003). L. M. Brown (1998), who studied anger in working

class girls, notes that during early adolescence, girls become aware of the patriarchal, dominant culture for the first time. They are able to verbally articulate the effects it has on their lives: strong feelings, such as anger, push people away and make them uncomfortable. Based on findings from interviews with young adolescent girls, Brown (1998) suggests that during early adolescence girls are acutely aware of when they are being themselves and when they are assuming the role of the good girl to maintain a relationship and satisfy the expectations of others. They observe and judge in themselves, as individuals, as well as in other girls, the hypocrisy of simultaneously taking on the conflicting roles of the good girl and the true self.

Dominant cultural definitions of femininity, such as the expectation that females will always be kind, happy, caring, nurturing, and giving, may cause girls to suppress their feelings of anger and frustration (L. M. Brown, 1998). According to Simmons (2002), girls are actively engaged in a struggle to voice their fear, sadness, and anger in the face of the pressure to conform to a culture that devalues and dismisses their feelings. The “tyranny of the nice and kind,” identified by L. M. Brown and Gilligan (1992, p. 53), forces girls to publicly express only those aspects of girlhood that people expect, such as being co-operative, kind, and good. Girls may suppress their true feelings, keeping their voices silent and choosing not to speak up so as not to jeopardize their relationships with others. Educational research literature suggests that boys may also experience this pressure to be cooperative, kind, and good, although both L. M. Brown and Simmons suggest that societal pressure remains greater for girls. Brown proposes that girls need to voice their opposition to the rules of the dominant culture if the expression of girls’ feelings via healthy pathways is to develop. However, unless a physically,

psychologically, and emotionally safe space is created, where these voices can be heard, girls will remain silent and the lasting psychological effects of suppressing their aggression will follow them into adulthood (Simmons; Wiseman, 2002).

Girls' Need for Power

One of the key characteristics of bullying is the power imbalance that exists between the victim and the victimizer (Marini et al., 2004). With regard to girls' friendship, this power imbalance warrants exploration because, as suggested by L. M. Brown (1998), relying on the more subtle relational forms of aggression is a way for girls to downplay their desire for personal and social power which culturally prescribed notions of femininity deny them. Furthermore, Vaillancourt et al. (2003) suggest that "issues of social power are critical to understanding the complex nature of bullying" (p. 159). Furthermore, they assert that the link between bullying and power is both significant and complex, with social power reflecting an interaction between social power and individual characteristics.

Lamb's (2001) interviews with American women and girls regarding their experiences of power, anger, and aggression suggest that girls frequently look for power through obedience. That is, girls who obey the rules of gender socialization are labeled as "good" and are rewarded. The rules of gender socialization require girls to be "good" or obedient at all times. Lamb suggests that girls who adhere to the rules of gender socialization are rewarded with a measure of social power, which gives them greater access to economic (i.e., gaining more money through a job promotion) and academic resources (i.e., increased help from teachers). At the same time, some girls try to be obedient so that those who truly have the power will give it to them. That is, they

recognize that power is the domain of those in authority (i.e., parents, teachers, coaches); thus, girls may seek to please these authority figures in order to gain power from them. For example, girls may obey the wishes of their teachers in hopes of achieving better grades or the wishes of parents in hopes of being rewarded with money, clothing, or other items that will increase their social status among their peers.

Lamb (2001) suggests that “‘good girls’ find secret ways to dominate others, either in private or in fantasy” (p. 179). They desire not only power, but power over another person. This desire is a natural, human feeling that produces pleasure and is not just a reaction to girls’ oppression and powerlessness.

Being powerful is often equated with being male (L. M. Brown, 2003). However, Lamb (2001) suggests that, more recently, the language of empowerment or “girl power” encourages girls to assert their influence in the world and take a stance against their own oppression. Because they often do not have power over others, some girls want it more and will go to great lengths to get it. According to Lamb, girls may engage in behaviors such as swearing, kicking, and punching, which are considered part of the male domain. However, within female bullying, manipulation and domination are part of a bully’s inner struggle to prove her power to herself by having power over her victim.

Simmons (2002), in exploring the two-sided or duplicitous nature of girls, explains that girls are socialized into a culture of indirection that cannot decide who girls should be. This culture glorifies female duplicity, depriving girls of power by sending them mixed messages, suggesting that they can have power but only through certain means which the culture dictates as acceptable. Girls are told to be “bold and timid, voracious and slight, sexual and demure” (p. 115). Images of females in the media

idealize deceit through manipulation and bolster the good girl/bad girl dichotomy. In trying to make sense of these mixed messages, girls deduce that manipulation, especially when it is sexual, is the best way to get power. Manipulation combines power with passivity, thus satisfying the dual roles that girls must play to make a smooth transition into the dominant culture. Consequently, girls resort to the use of alternative aggressions in situations of conflict as a means of regaining the power of which they are deprived through the culturally reinforced gender stereotypes of the dominant patriarchy.

Duncan and Owen-Smith (2006), who tested a social contextual explanation of indirect aggression in both men and women, hypothesized that powerlessness was associated with the use of indirect aggression. They defined powerlessness as someone having anxiety about his or her friendship status. Duncan and Owen-Smith found that lack of power within same-gender friendships was associated with increased use of indirect aggression.

Educational Implications

The bullying experiences that are particularly salient among girls have been characterized using such terms as social aggression (Underwood, 2003), relational aggression (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), relational victimization (Crick et al. 2001), indirect aggression (Bjorkqvist, Osterman, & Kaukiainen, 1992), and indirect harassment (Owens et al., 2001). Although each term describes a slightly different set of behaviors, they are often used synonymously in the research literature and in educational settings.

Collectively, and for the purposes of the present study, they all refer to the social phenomenon of female bullying. The variety in perspectives suggests that the scope of this phenomenon is quite large and heterogeneous; thus, further research into the topic is

warranted. Additionally, it gives evidence that bullying among girls is complex and somehow different from bullying among boys or between girls and boys.

Intervention programs based on the work of Olweus usually target physical bullying behaviors and rely heavily on adults' seeing, interpreting, and responding to incidents of bullying (L. M. Brown, 2003). However, as L. M. Brown suggests, whether direct or indirect, physical or relational, girl fighting or bullying occurs away from the eyes of adult. Consequently, when bullying among girls does receive attention in schools, only physical acts culminating in violence are addressed. Any underlying psychological acts that may have escalated into violence are often overlooked. Furthermore, Brown suggests that as girls get older they learn to hide their conflict and aggression. By sixth or seventh grade, girls are unlikely to label behaviors such as spreading rumours, gossip, and exclusion as bullying and to reveal their situations of conflict. Thus, it follows that during early adolescence girls may be less likely to report situations of female bullying to parents, teachers, or administrators.

Many parents, coaches, and teachers avoid intervening in bullying situations because they feel it is unnecessary (Simmons, 2002). They assume that bullying, if left untreated, will resolve naturally. Physical bullying in males is frequently dismissed with the simple phrase "boys will be boys." However, in studying the cultural stereotypes of boys, Pollack (1998) argues that phrases like this perpetuate myths about boyhood. They are so deeply entrenched in our culture that their falseness goes undetected, causing a distorted view of boys and boyhood. The idea that bullying can be ignored is increasingly being abandoned, and it is now accepted that bullying requires some sort of intervention (Marini et al., 2000).

Just as the phrase “Boys will be boys” is used to dismiss male aggression, the female counterpart “Girls will be girls,” has similar implications. Simmons (2002) explains the persistence of this idea within female bullying by employing the rite of passage theory, which is the notion that female bullying is a rite of passage and a stage that girls will outgrow. Simmons suggests that this theory makes several false assumptions about girls:

1. Female bullying is universal. Because so many girls engage in alternative aggressions, they must somehow be inherently predisposed to such behaviors.
2. Female bullying is instructive. Since women are confronted with alternative aggressions in adulthood, it is necessary for girls to experience and prepare for these behaviors during adolescence.
3. Female bullying is natural. Cruelty is a natural part of the social hierarchy of girls; and thus, it should be tolerated and accepted.
4. The abuse that girls use on each other is not abuse at all.

Simmons (2002) suggests that viewing female bullying as a rite of passage affirms its presence and acceptance in society as a stereotype of girlhood. The rite of passage theory clouds our thinking of about how culture shapes the behavior of girls. Consequently, parents, teachers, school counsellors, and coaches may shrug off female bullying because they don't want to interfere in the “emotional lives” of students. As well, teachers require order in their classrooms. Dealing with a relational problem is a complex and time-consuming task that detracts time from teachers' main task of completing their lessons. Thus, teachers have little or no incentive to intervene in situations of female bullying where the behaviors can be easily overlooked.

According to Simmons (2002), the philosophy of not intervening in female bullying due to its emotional nature is problematic in two ways. First, it makes a value judgment that problems between girls are insignificant, which trivializes girls' experiences. Second, a strategy of noninterference ignores the potential role of peers in children's development by suggesting that girls' school experiences are training for life rather than life itself.

School policies regarding student harassment or peer victimization are usually vague and deal mostly with physical behaviors (L. M. Brown, 2003; Simmons, 2002). Simmons suggests that this is due to a lack of shared language to identify and discuss the behaviors associated with female bullying. Furthermore, vague school policies hinder the development of antibullying strategies that could help girls cope with conflict in an effective manner. Therefore, a need exists for a deeper understanding of girls' friendship experiences with respect to bullying in schools.

Conclusions

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a critical review of the relevant research literature related to girls' friendships and bullying. This chapter served to highlight the social phenomenon of bullying within the context of girls' same-sex friendships. This chapter first examined the peer culture of adolescents, suggesting that the peer group is an important context for adolescent development and discussing some key elements of adolescent friendships. Second, this chapter explored girls' friendships, which included a critical review of the current literature related to the dynamics of girls' friendships. Third, this chapter examined girls' aggression, attending specifically to girls'

anger and need for power. Finally, this chapter outlined and discussed some educational implications of female bullying in schools.

Overall, this chapter emphasized the complexity of bullying within the context of girls' friendships and the serious nature of bullying among girls. The present study explored bullying within the context of young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships. In particular, it examined bullying behaviors within girls' dyadic and group friendships as well as the dynamics of girls' friendship.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The present chapter outlines the methodology carried out in this study including both research and ethical considerations. Described in this chapter are the research design, participants, ethical procedures, interview procedures, data collection, data analysis, and credibility.

Research Design

This is a qualitative, narrative study. Creswell (2007) describes qualitative research in the following way:

We conduct qualitative research because a problem or issue needs to be explored.

This exploration is needed, in turn, because of a need to study a group or population, identify variables that can then be measured, or hear silenced voices.

(p. 39)

In the present study the issue that needs to be explored is bullying in friendships, the population being studied is young adolescent girls, and a related goal of the study is to empower girls' voices through exploring their friendship narratives. According to Creswell (2002), narrative research focuses on "gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual" (p. 521).

As the researcher, I sought to understand young adolescent girls' experiences of bullying within their same-sex friendships by listening to their perceptions of their friendship experiences. In addition, a related goal of this study was to empower young adolescent girls by providing a safe forum for their voices. By offering the participants the opportunity to reflect on their friendship experiences without fear of judgment or

punishment, I hoped to lay the foundations that would promote social change and understanding first in the lives of young adolescent girls and then in the lives of their parents, teachers, coaches, and the wider community.

Participants

The participants in this study were young adolescent girls in 2 grade 7 classes from a private religious school in southern Ontario (grades 7 to 12). The school accepted students in grade 7; therefore, all of the girls in this study were new to the school. Previous to attending this school, 1 of the participants was home-schooled, 1 attended public school, and the rest attended another private religious elementary school. The girls ranged in age from 11 to 12 years old. The only requirements for participation were gender (female), grade level (grade 7), parent/guardian consent, and language competency in spoken English. Based on the information I received during my ethics meeting with the principal of the school, I learned that all of the girls in the study were middle to upper middle class in socioeconomic status. Four of the 5 girls were Caucasian and 1 was of Asian descent. Because this was a small school, all of the girls who participated in this study knew each other previous to the study being conducted.

Ethical Procedures

Prior to beginning data collection, ethics clearance was obtained from Brock University's Research Ethics Review Board (see Appendix A). I also met with the principal of the school to discuss the study and to gain ethics approval from the school. The principal of the school notified the teachers of the grade 7 classes and arranged for me to meet with the grade 7 girls to introduce the study. I distributed letters of information and consent forms to the parents of all the girls in grade 7 from this school.

Based on the responses from these letters, I began personal interviews with only those girls who gave verbal assent and whose parents/guardians gave written consent to their participation.

As the researcher, I promised to change the names and identifying characteristics of the students and school in the final document in order to maintain their anonymity and confidentiality. Given the sensitive nature of the topic I tried to insure the emotional and psychological safety of the participants and their parents by making them aware of their school's support services such as classroom teachers, counsellors, and principals. Additionally, the letter of information outlined to parents that should a participant disclose any information that legally required reporting, the appropriate school authorities would be notified. Throughout the research process, I encouraged students, teachers, parents, and the principal of the school to contact me regarding any questions or concerns. I also made it clear to all the participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time without academic penalty.

Interview Procedures

An interview, in its basic form, is a means of gaining direct access to a participant's experience (Schwandt, 2001). However, it can also be viewed as a narrative event in which the meanings and questions are jointly constructed by the researcher and the participant and are grounded in the context of the interview. For the purposes of this study, I selected personal interviews as the most appropriate means of accessing the data that would inform my research questions.

According to Creswell (2002), "an interview protocol is a form designed by the researcher that contains instructions for the process of the interview, the questions to be

asked, and a space to take notes on responses from the interviewee” (p. 212). In designing the interview protocol for this study, I wanted to insure that the voices of the girls rather than my own voice controlled the direction of the interview. I also considered my position as a researcher in relationship to the girls I interviewed. Having no connection with their school community, I was unfamiliar to them, and thus we needed to build rapport, respect, and trust with each other in order for their stories to wholly emerge. In each interview, my goal was to acknowledge the voices of girls by listening to their friendship narratives without judgment and to provide a safe forum where girls could reflect on their experiences with their peers.

At the beginning of each interview, by following the opening script of the interview protocol (see Appendix B), I introduced myself to the participant and explained the purpose of my research and the interview. I reiterated that their participation was voluntary, meaning that they should not feel obligated to participate even if their parents wanted them to. I explained that anything they told me in this session was confidential and that their individual responses would not be reported to teachers or parents. I asked if they were willing to participate in the interview. Upon verbal assent I thanked them for their participation and started the tape recorder. In total, I allowed 30 minutes for each interview.

Using an unstructured interview format (Creswell, 2002) which allowed for changes in the direction of the discussion, I focused on letting the participant control the direction of the interview. The only probes (Creswell) or clarifying questions I asked were, “Can you tell me what you mean by . . . ?” or “Can you tell me more about . . . ?” As I listened to each participant, I tried not only to listen to her words but also to observe

changes in her tone of voice or body language as part of her story. I recorded any notable changes or key ideas on the interview protocols sheets for each interview.

When a participant had difficulty answering a question, I would pause to allow her time to think and ask if she understood the question. If she continued to have difficulty I would refer back to one of her previous statements and use it as a starting point for the question. If she still continued to have difficulty answering the question, I would move on to the next question with hopes of returning to the original question if time allowed. If a participant appeared anxious, worried, or upset, I would ask if she would like to take a break for a few moments and reminded her that she could skip a question if she wanted to. I also suggested that she might want to speak with her teacher, principal, and/or school counsellor when they were available.

At the end of each interview I allowed each participant to return to any topic that she wanted to discuss further or to discuss a new topic. Once the discussion was complete, I followed the closing script to explain what I would be doing with the interview information and what we would do at our next session.

To debrief the participants and as a member check (Schwandt, 2001), I met with each participant on a second occasion to review the interview transcript. I read through the transcript with the participant and asked her to check it for accuracy. I also retold her stories to make sure I understood the sequence of events and relevant details. We discussed anything that she felt was unclear or wanted to change. I made further notes on the transcripts based on these discussions.

Data Collection

The data collected from the interview sessions can be described as narrative data.

Narrative data refers to “a personal experience story [that] relates the teller to some significant episode, event, or personal experience” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 168).

Participants’ responses to the interview questions were recorded on a cassette tape.

Additionally, I recorded notes on a copy of the interview protocol for each interview session. Each interview tape and its corresponding notes were labelled with the participant’s first name and the date of the interview. All information was kept confidential but was not anonymous.

The raw data from each interview tape was made into a transcript (Creswell, 2008). A transcript is a written account of what a participant said in response to the researcher’s questions, while transcription is the process of preparing a record of a participant’s own words (Schwandt, 2001). I replayed the cassette from each interview and recorded the data using my computer’s word processor.

Data Analysis

Once each interview transcript was complete I printed a copy to follow as I listened to the participant’s tape. I used my computer’s word processor as well as hard copies of the transcripts to code the data. “Coding is a procedure that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 26).

The object of the coding process is to make sense out of the text data, divide it into text or image segments, label the segments with codes, examine codes for overlap

and redundancy, and collapse these codes into broad themes. (Creswell, 2008, p. 251)

Using the participants' tapes and a highlighter, I reviewed each interview transcript and assigned codes to segments of the text. I also recorded each code in my research journal so that I would have a list of all codes assigned to a transcript. Every time I assigned a code to a segment of the transcript, I also recorded it in the journal list. After repeating this process several times with the transcript, I reviewed the list of codes in my journal and highlighted any repeated codes. I also created a descriptive list of common and emerging themes that I discovered in each transcript. This list of repeated codes and themes was used as a starting point for each additional transcript I reviewed. Over time, new codes were added, old codes were changed, and others were deleted. Once all of the interview transcripts had been coded, I used the final list of codes, along with each list of common and emerging themes, to create the overall themes for this study. At all times during the process of data analysis, I used the main research question to guide my listening, the coding of the data, and the development of themes. Whenever I needed to refocus or simplify my thinking, I would ask myself, "How does this idea/story/code illustrate the bullying experiences of girls within their same-sex friendships?" This continual questioning helped me identify and highlight the key ideas within participants' narratives.

In analyzing the transcripts, I first used the bullying subtypes identified by Marini and Dane (2008). To code participants' references to bullying behaviors, I first examined the form of bullying. I focused on whether the bullying behaviors described were direct or indirect. Next, I examined the function of bullying behaviors to identify whether they

were proactive or reactive. Finally, I examined the participants' involvement in bullying to see if they were bullies, victims, bystanders, or bully-victims. Schwandt (2001) refers to this type of coding as a prior, content-specific scheme because it is informed by the study of the problem or topic of investigation and the theoretical interests that drive the inquiry.

In analyzing the data for common and emerging themes, I employed aspects of L. M. Brown and Gilligan's (1992) "Listener's Guide," which they describe as a voice-centred and relational approach to research. I felt that the "Listener's Guide" was valuable for this study because it offered a means to attend to the voices of girls. The "Listener's Guide" required that I listen to each interview tape four times, each time attending to a different question:

1. Who is speaking?
2. In what body?
3. Telling what story about relationship?
4. In what societal or cultural frameworks?

Brown and Gilligan suggest that each of these questions gives insight into the complexity of voice and relationship of the participants. During each of the four listenings, I employed various in-vivo codes (Creswell, 2008) which came from the actual language of the participants as outlined in the transcript.

The goal of the first listening is simply to establish the plot, to "get a sense of what is happening, to follow the unfolding events, to listen to the drama (who, what, when, where, and why of the narrative)" (L. M. Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 27).

Assigning codes is not the main goal of the first listening, but finding different levels of

the problem or conflict revealed in the story. Things that support and conflict with the participants' stories are important.

During the second listening, the focus is listening for the voice of the "I" or "self." During the second listening I used the word "I" and references to the self as the basis for in-vivo codes. For example, a participant's response may have begun with the words, "I felt" or "I thought." These phrases helped me assign the codes of thoughts, behaviors, and feelings in hopes of gaining insight into my second supporting research question: What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors characterize the same-sex friendships of young adolescent girls? According to L. M. Brown and Gilligan (1992), these first two listenings establish a responsive relationship between the listener and the person speaking by causing the listener to take in the voice of another.

The goal of the third and fourth listenings is to attend to how people talk about relationship, and in particular to listen to the ways institutionalized and cultural norms and values become moral voices that silence the voices of those speaking. In this study, the third listening, in which the researcher focuses on what story is being told about relationships, provided much insight. During the third listening I focused on how the participant spoke of others. For example, the words they used to describe their close friends or the words they used to describe others in situations of conflict were important to note.

During the final listening, I attended to what L. M. Brown and Gilligan (1992) describe as the "false relationships" (p. 36), that is, the relationships where the participant cannot speak or her voice is not heard because it is masked by the voice of another. While the fourth listening offered insight into all of my research questions, it especially

informed the third supporting question: How do young adolescent girls negotiate conflict within their same-sex friendships? This is because girls' voices are often masked in relational conflicts as a result of an inner conflict between being themselves and maintaining their relationships (L. M. Brown, 2003).

L. M. Brown and Gilligan (2002) suggest that in these listenings what is not said is just as important as what is. Initially, a participant's silence in response to a question may suggest to the researcher that she does not understand the question. However, in highly sensitive and emotional topics such as conflict within friendship, a participant's silence may indicate that she is battling an internal conflict in trying to decide which voice to use to respond to a question. Should she say what she really thinks, or should she say what she has learned that others want to hear. Brown and Gilligan suggest that the listening guide pushes the researcher to attend to the sociocultural context of a participant's silence rather than ignoring it. That is, the meaning of silence in any interview can be viewed within the specific time, place, and context of the story being told and with respect to the person telling the story.

Establishing Credibility

After the interview recording was transcribed, to establish credibility in the present study, I held a member check session with each participant (Schwandt, 2001), to review the data and discuss any clarifications or omissions that were necessary. I met with each participant for approximately 20 minutes. Any changes to the original transcript documents were based on the results of these sessions.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to explore how young adolescent girls experience bullying in their same-sex friendships by highlighting the friendship narratives of 5 grade 7 girls from a private, religious school in southern Ontario. The main research question in this study was: How do young adolescent girls experience bullying in their same-sex friendships? Stemming from this main question were three supporting questions:

1. How do young adolescent girls establish and maintain their same-sex friendships?
2. What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors characterize young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships?
3. How do young adolescent girls negotiate conflict within their same-sex friendships?

These research questions guided all stages of the data analysis process, including how codes were selected and assigned to the data, as well as the development of the major themes.

In examining girls' experiences of bullying in their same-sex friendships, I first reviewed the interview transcripts to identify examples of bullying behaviors within each participant's stories. Table 1 gives a summary of the participants.

As outlined in Chapter Three, I used Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes to code the form and function of the bullying behaviors. Additionally, I used the bullying participant roles identified by Marini et al. (2004) to code the participants' involvement in situations of bullying.

Table 1

Summary of Participants

Name	Age	Class	Start date
Bethany	12	7 - 1	September
Lisa	12	7 - 2	September
Melanie	12	7 - 2	September
Tamara	12	7 - 2	September
Carly	11	7 - 2	January

Note. Names used are pseudonyms.

In analyzing the data for common and emerging themes, I employed aspects of L. M. Brown and Gilligan's (1992) "Listener's Guide," which they describe as a voice-centred and relational approach to research. As I listened to the interview tapes and reviewed the transcripts, I tried to attend to the voice of each participant while also recognizing that each story is embedded in a sociocultural context. Six major themes emerged from the interview conversations including acceptance, intimacy, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion, moral character judgements, and power. Within girls' same-sex friendships, the interactions between these themes are complex and dynamic. As illustrated by Figure 1, girls' same-sex friendships are dynamic and reciprocal in nature. This feature of girl's friendships is represented in the visual framework using double-headed arrows. Intimacy and acceptance appear to be closely linked and central to girls' same-sex friendships; therefore, they are linked and placed in the middle of the visual framework. Power, moral character judgements, inclusion, and exclusion may influence girls' same-sex friendships or exist as a result of girls' friendships.

The present chapter highlights the subtypes of bullying described within the participants' friendship narratives, including the form, the function, and the involvement in bullying. This chapter also outlines the major themes that emerged from this investigation. The same-sex friendship narratives of the participants in this study presented in this chapter serve to connect the bullying behaviors to these major themes.

Bullying Behaviors

The girls in this study described various behaviors that were employed within their same-sex friendships. All of the girls were able to describe the behavior of other girls, while most were able to describe their own behavior.

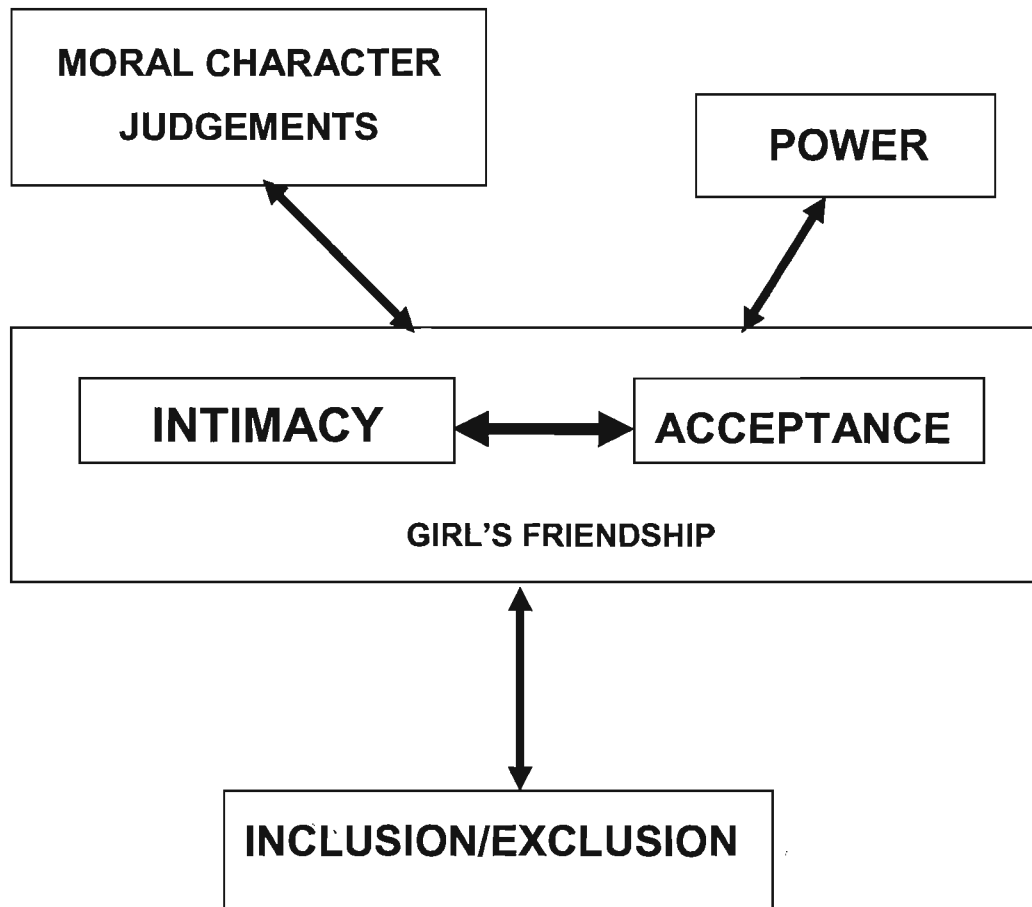


Figure 1. Visual framework.

First, within their same-sex friendships, the participants in this study assumed roles in all four categories of bullying involvement. Figure 2 serves as a summary of the participants' involvement in bullying, including the bully, victim, bystander, and bully-victim (Marini et al., 2004). Three participants assumed the role of the bully in their same-sex friendships. All participants assumed the role of the victim in their same-sex friendships. All of the participants acted as bystanders within their same-sex friendships. Three of the participants assumed the role of the bully-victim in their friendships.

Second, within the participants' stories, 17 different bullying behaviors were described. The participants employed more indirect bullying behaviors ($n = 11$) than direct bullying behaviors ($n = 6$) within their same-sex friendships. Figure 3 serves as a summary of the types of bullying behaviors that were direct or indirect in nature, as outlined in the participants' stories.

Finally, the participants in this study employed both proactive and reactive bullying behaviors within their same-sex friendships. Six bullying behaviors were proactive, 4 bullying behaviors were reactive, and 7 bullying behaviors were both proactive and reactive. Figure 4 serves as a summary of the bullying behaviors according to function using the categories proactive, reactive, or both.

Acceptance

All of the participants in this study identified a need for acceptance in themselves and others. This need was described in various ways, such as needing a friend and trying to fit in. For example, in describing her group friendship, Bethany said, "Well, when I

first came to this school I was like really, really trying to fit in with Naveen and all those people” (Bethany, age 12, 2005). In describing her close dyadic friendship Lisa said,

Involvement	Bully	Victim	Bystander	Bully-Victim
	<i>Bethany</i>	<i>Bethany</i>	<i>Bethany</i>	<i>Bethany</i>
	<i>Melanie</i>	<i>Melanie</i>	<i>Melanie</i>	<i>Melanie</i>
	<i>Carly</i>	<i>Lisa</i>	<i>Lisa</i>	<i>Carly</i>
		<i>Tamara</i>	<i>Tamara</i>	
		<i>Carly</i>	<i>Carly</i>	

Figure 2. Summary of participants' involvement in bullying.

Form	Direct	Indirect
	<i>making fun of someone,</i> <i>revenge,</i> <i>ultimatums,</i> <i>name calling,</i> <i>swearing,</i> <i>walking away</i>	<i>trying to put on an act,</i> <i>talking behind back,</i> <i>rolling eyes,</i> <i>telling others not to be</i> <i>friends with someone,</i> <i>dirty looks,</i> <i>ignoring,</i> <i>mean gestures,</i> <i>whispering,</i> <i>betraying secrets,</i> <i>spreading rumours,</i> <i>exclusion</i>

Figure 3. Summary of bullying behaviors by form.

Function	Proactive	Reactive	Both
	<i>ultimatums,</i> <i>name calling,</i> <i>swearing,</i> <i>mean gestures,</i> <i>betraying secrets,</i> <i>spreading rumours</i>	<i>revenge,</i> <i>dirty looks,</i> <i>talking behind back,</i> <i>trying to put on an</i> <i>act</i>	<i>making fun of</i> <i>someone,</i> <i>walking away,</i> <i>talking behind back,</i> <i>rolling eyes,</i> <i>ignoring,</i> <i>exclusion,</i> <i>whispering</i>

Figure 4. Summary of bullying behaviors by function.

“Well, she just seemed like a person who needed a friend and she seemed really nice . . . I feel happy that I am wanted as a friend . . . I feel happy that she likes me as a friend” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). In speaking about her close dyadic friendship, Carly simply said, “I wanted to be friends with her . . . I like it but her mom doesn’t like it” (Carly, age 11, 2005). All of these examples, in some way, articulate the need for acceptance that girls try to satisfy through friendships with other girls.

All of the participants also identified negative feelings associated with belonging to a group or being accepted by friends, such as sadness, hurt, and conflict. Consider Melanie’s response when I asked her about her group of friends, “I hang out with a group of friends, about three other people other than me . . . But I like hanging out with a group of girls better than one. In case one person stops being friends with you, then you can always have other friends to be with. If somebody’s sick you can hang out with people who aren’t sick” (Melanie, age 12, 2005). I also asked Melanie how belonging to this group made her feel. She replied, “Happy that I actually have friends. Especially coming from home school, I didn’t know if I would make friends that fast. But I think I’m a likeable person. It definitely gets you sad sometimes what people say, especially when they say it to your face. It can be very hurtful.” In this case, Melanie experienced happiness knowing that she was accepted by a group of friends. However, she also recognized that belonging to a group has its difficulties because of the negative experiences and feelings that sometimes occur.

When I asked Bethany to tell me about the group of friends she belonged to she said, “Me, Kiana, Naveen, and Chrissy, we’re all like the main group of friends. There’s a girl Allison. She was kind of in it last year and I think she thought I kind of took her

place. So we got in like a conflict. So we didn't really like each other. She always just thought like you're taking over my spot and all that kind of stuff. And she would say, 'You don't act like you're my friend. You act like you're only their friends.' And she would always pull me aside and say, 'You should really not hang out with them as much' and that kind of stuff' (Bethany, age 12, 2005). I then asked Bethany why she wanted to be a part of this group. She replied with a laugh, "They're popular! And Kiana really seemed cool when I came, and then Naveen. Well, her step-dad just passed away and I could relate to that because my mom got in a car accident, so then we would always talk about that. She came when I first came to this school, and she was helping me through my problems and stuff" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). I also asked Bethany how being a part of this group made her feel. She responded, "I like it. It's fun" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). This example also illustrates that acceptance is not without cost. Bethany also had to deal with the conflict created when she became a member of this group.

I asked Lisa about the group of friends that she spends time with at school. She replied:

Pretty much all of the grade 7 girls are friends. I don't like a few of them, but I still hang around them . . . Well they didn't say I don't want to be your friend anymore or anything. They didn't do anything really bad so I didn't want to be their friend anymore. It's just that we're not best friends. (Lisa, age 12, 2005)

Lisa also described a group of girls who she considered her closest friends among the grade 7 girls. These girls included Melanie, Shayna, and Tanya. Lisa said, "Pretty much everyone didn't know anyone on the first day, and we all sort of got to know each other and we all sort of became friends" (Lisa, age 12, 2005). This group became close when

they all tried to help Melanie. Lisa recalled, “Well, when Melanie was getting sick in the morning and stuff, like everyone pretty much cared about her and we all shared the same feelings for her and we all tried to like be friends with her so she would get used to it” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). Describing her feelings when the group was helping Melanie, Lisa said, “Well I felt sad for Melanie that she was feeling so bad. But I felt happy when I would try and help her” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). Lisa said she wanted to be a part of this group because “well, they’re all really nice . . . and they care about what is happening in my life” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). Being a part of this group, Lisa said, “makes me feel happy that I am included” (Lisa, age 12, 2005).

Intimacy

Throughout this study, the participants used a variety of terms to describe their friendships. These terms included acquaintance, friend, good friend, close friend, best friend, and true friend. The following examples demonstrate how girls use these terms when describing their friendships.

In describing one of her dyadic friendships, Bethany said, “Well, during like kind of the middle of the year, me and Naveen were really, really close friends. We were good friends and then I don’t know” (Bethany, age 12, 2005). This example demonstrates the idea that young adolescent girls may use various terms to describe the same friendship. In this case, Bethany described her friendship with Naveen as “really, really close friends” and “good friends.” When I asked Bethany if things ended with Naveen, she replied, “Yeah, but we’re still friends Well, we just weren’t as close” (Bethany, age 12, 2005). This example illustrates that girls use different terms to describe their friendships.

To further this idea, consider the following example from Lisa. In describing a dyadic friendship, Lisa said, “Well I really like Melanie. She’s my best friend” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). In this case, Lisa used the term “best friend” to describe her relationship with Melanie. Conversely, Melanie, in describing the same friendship, said, “A close friend. I think it would have to be Lisa We’ve only known each other since the beginning of the year so we haven’t done many things together but she would be considered my friend” (Melanie, age 12, 2005). Melanie described Lisa as a “close friend” or “friend,” while Lisa considered Melanie to be her “best friend.”

Intimacy and time were often mentioned together during this study. As a starting point, consider the following example from Tamara:

Well I never really had another close friend except for Melanie that I met at this school. She’s been a close friend but not my best friend. We’ve never broken up being friends but we haven’t really known each other long enough to do that Well, my best friend I’ve known for a long time, and Melanie and I just met.
(Tamara, age 12, 2005)

To further reflect intimacy and time, consider Melanie’s response when I asked her to tell me about one of her close dyadic friendships:

A close friend. I think it would have to be Lisa We like to do things together like go shopping and do girlie stuff Like buy clothes and get ice cream and stuff. We’ve only known each other since the beginning of the year so we haven’t done many things together, but she would be considered my friend Well there might have been a time where we weren’t as close. It was when I was more friends with Tamara, but Tamara has been on and off with different people so I wouldn’t

consider her a true friend. So Lisa's been with me ever since the first day of school. We haven't stopped. (Melanie, age 12, 2005)

Melanie then explained that she had been closer with Tamara during the first 3 months of the school year. To clarify this change in closeness, I asked Melanie to tell me more about what happened with this relationship. She explained:

I don't really know why I hung out with Tamara instead of Lisa, but she was always running around doing things. Lisa didn't want to do as many things as Tamara does. Lisa's not really an athletic person. She's more of a smart type, so I don't really know why I started hanging out with Tamara. It was just maybe most of the girls were hanging out with her and not Lisa Well now after those 3 months it's been Lisa and I. It's never been on and off with Tamara. Lisa and I are like really close friends, but Tamara and I are friends. She's not that nice to me all the time; she kind of acts snotty. (Melanie, age 12, 2005)

The above example also illustrates intimacy being described with time.

Intimacy was also mentioned frequently with talking, as all of the participants in this study were able to articulate a variety of topics that they talked about with their close or best friends. For example, when I asked Bethany what she talked about with her close friend Kiana, she laughed and began, "Boys! How other of our friends, how we wish they were kind of nicer and wish they would tell like everything that's on their minds" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). When I asked Bethany to tell me more about what she does with her group of friends, she replied, "Well, we usually talk, usually mostly about whoever [someone] likes and how they're gonna try to like go on a date with them and stuff like that. Like what am I going to wear? What am I going to buy for him to start

liking me? And then we talk about like family problems and issues” (Bethany, age 12, 2005).

Lisa reported that when she and her best friend Melanie are together, they spend their time shopping, getting their nails done, and talking. Lisa said, “We talk about our feelings and how we are, and we’re doing the school play so we talk about that” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). When I asked Melanie what she and Lisa do when they are together, she replied, “We like to talk about what we do at home, how we get along with our sibling, things our parents say to each other when we ask them a question, and stuff like that . . . like if they give an answer and we don’t think that’s a fair answer we come to school and talk about how unfair it was” (Melanie, age 12, 2005).

Tamara also reported that she and her best friend Julie talk when they are together. She said, “We talk about when we’re gonna go baby sit. What we do for fun is like go to the movies, swim in my pool. She comes over a lot We talk about our friendship and how long it has lasted and how we want to keep it a long time” (Tamara, age 12, 2005).

Carly, in describing her close friend Amelia, reported:

Well, we still sleep over and go to the movies and we go shopping. We talk about boys and what you bought when you went shopping and stuff and then your school because we go to different schools. She also moved to a different school.

And then we talk about people who we don’t like. (Carly, age 11, 2005)

These examples demonstrate a repeated pattern of talking with intimacy within the participants’ same-sex friendships.

The girls' conversations reflect that talking plays a role in intimacy within their same-sex friendships. The results of this study further suggest that disclosure is a component of talking within girls' friendships. The participants in this study identified being able to talk and share secrets as one of the main reasons they enjoyed having a close dyadic friendship. For example, when I asked Bethany how her friendship with Kiana made her feel, she responded, "I love it! I can just tell her everything and she'll be there for me all the time. I love her!" She later added, "We were really, really close, like I never wanted to be away from her. I felt like I could tell her anything and she would help me get through it or whatever" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). In describing how she might feel if she had a close friendship end, Melanie said, "If it was Lisa, I'd be very sad because Lisa is the type that you go home and call on the phone and you talk about the things that happened during the day, and it's nice to have somebody like that to talk to . . . I would miss that part of our friendship" (Melanie, age 12, 2005). When I asked Tamara how being best friends with Julie made her feel, she paused and then replied, "Sometimes it makes me feel great because you always have someone to talk to and share a secret with and go to the movies with, and it's nice to do that" (Tamara, age 12, 2005). In describing a true friend, Carly said, "Well, if you tell a secret they don't tell people and they stand up for you" (Carly, age 11, 2005). All of these examples highlight the importance the participants place on sharing feelings and receiving support from their close friends and thus suggest that disclosure while talking is an important part of girls' friendships.

The girls' conversations also demonstrate that lack of disclosure is a component of girls' friendships. As a starting point, consider the following story told by Bethany:

She was kind of like starting not to be a good Christian, like swearing and hanging around the wrong people. And so then I didn't want to be her friend because, I don't know. I just don't want to get involved with people like that. So then I told her that I think you should really work on your friendship . . . not friendship but, I don't know, your attitude and things at home and stuff. She wasn't always telling me the truth like about her family problems, and so then I just felt excluded kind of. So then I hanged [*sic*] out with Kiana more, and we got closer and closer. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

Bethany went on to describe her feelings when the same friendship started to end. She said:

Well, I was kind of feeling like I don't really know if I really want to, like why would I want to be friends with someone, like they swear and they're just not who I really want to hang out with Well, I was kind of upset because I loved telling her everything. But I was kind of glad too, because she wasn't really telling me everything going on in her family life and all that kind of stuff Well, we just weren't as close. We used to hang out all the time, like after school and on weekends, and then it just got to where we didn't want to hang out anymore.

(Bethany, age 12, 2005)

In this case, Bethany felt that Naveen was not sharing her true feelings about her family problems, and the friendship changed over time to the point where the two girls didn't want to spend time together anymore.

As a further example, consider the following story from Carly, who started at the school later than the other participants:

Well, I really don't hang out with people in my class, 7B. I hang out with people in 7A . . . because I'm from public school, I'm different from people who got home schooled. So when I was trying to be friends with people in 7B, but then they never liked me back because I was different. 'Cause I talked different from them and stuff like that. And I think different. Like I think they're kind of weird, like they don't know anything. If you say something, they don't get you. Well I was kind of bullied by people in 7B, like the girls kind of. I didn't know things about school like where something is and stuff like that, and they didn't try to help me or tell me anything . . . Okay, well Melanie, she didn't like me and she was telling Lisa not to be friends with me. Whenever I told them something they would tell people and they would think it was funny . . . like secrets, I'd tell them, and then they would tell other people. (Carly, age 11, 2005)

In this case, Carly did not establish friendships with the other girls in her class. Carly's disclosure of her secrets resulted in betrayal by the girls in her class. In the end, Carly established friendships with the girls in another class.

Negotiation

The girls' interview conversations reflected a pattern of ongoing maintenance of their friendships with other girls. More specifically, the girls in this study were continually engaged in attempts to maintain closeness within their dyadic and group friendships at school. To demonstrate this idea, consider the following story from Bethany:

Well, during the middle of the year I went on a trip, and then when I came back she [Kiana] was really close with Naveen. That's one of our other friends that

introduced me to Kiana. And then I don't know. I felt excluded so, I didn't really speak or tell her everything Well, because she usually always hangs around with me and she was hanging around with Naveen. And it felt like well . . . I don't know does she not want to be friends with me and stuff like that. As soon as she found out that I didn't really know why she was being friends with Naveen, not that that's a bad thing, but I don't know. We were always just good friends, and then I was kind of mean and she was like acting mean back . . . just cause I would hang out with someone else, and then she would kind of get upset and she would try to get back at me and hang out with someone else. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

In the previous example, the physical distance, time spent together, and talking between Bethany and Kiana came to a sudden halt when Bethany went away on a trip. When Bethany returned, maintaining closeness within her friendship with Kiana became problematic. Bethany felt excluded from the friendship because Kiana was spending more time with Naveen. She stopped sharing her feelings with Kiana. Communication between the girls was problematic, and the closeness between the two girls was uncertain, as indicated by Bethany's question, "Does she not want to be friends with me?" (Bethany, age 12, 2005).

The following example illustrates how Lisa attempted to maintain closeness in one of her friendships:

Well, when my best friend Trina was hanging around the other girl, lots of other girls were hanging around them too. So I wanted to be in that group and I sort of was, but not really I didn't hang around them all the time and I wanted to hang around them more. But then they started doing more bad things, so then I

didn't want to. I was friends with Heather and Jessica but not as good as friends as I was with Trina . . . a lot of my friends were hanging out with them and there wasn't [*sic*] as many people around, so I wanted to be with my friends still. (Lisa, age 12, 2005)

Common Interests, Experiences, and Relationships

All of the participants in this study indicated that their close dyadic friendships developed because they had something in common with another girl. Their descriptions could be grouped into three categories: common interests, common experiences, and common relationships. These three categories can be demonstrated by the following example from Bethany. In describing her close friendship with Kiana, Bethany said:

She plays in all the sports I play. We hang out all the time, and we have the same interests We became friends because we both played on the hockey team together. And I don't know, just because I was hanging around with some of her friends. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

The common interest in sports, the common experience of playing on the same hockey team, as well as the relationships that Bethany and Kiana had in common were all a part of their friendship.

This idea is further supported by Melanie's response when asked about her close friendship with Lisa. She replied, "Well she has a lot in common with me. She doesn't like boys like I do . . . like I don't. Well most of the girls do, so we're kind of not at that stage yet. We met on the day before school because we didn't know where to go or what to do, so we kind of hung out with each other for the first day of school. We went through things. We forgot everything for the first day of school" (Melanie, age 12,

2005). For these two girls, being interested in things other than boys, helping each other through a new experience, and attending the same school were components in the two of them establishing a friendship.

All of the participants in this study described school along with their friendships. Attending the same school was one of the common experiences identified by all of the participants. For example, when asked how she became close friends with another girl, Lisa reported, “We met on the first day here. There was a sign-up day, and we met then” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). To the same question, Melanie replied, “We met on the day before school because we didn’t know where to go or what to do, so we kind of hung out with each other for the first day of school” (Melanie, age 12, 2005). When asked where she met her close friend, Carly replied, “At my old school” (Carly, age 11, 2005).

All of the participants referred to dyadic and group friendships that they had with schoolmates during their interviews. However, school was not the only common experience to which the participants referred. When asked about her close friendship, Bethany replied, “Well her step-dad just passed away and I could relate to that because my mom got in a car accident, so then we would always talk about that” (Bethany, age 12, 2005). The common experience of losing a parent was a part of these girls’ friendship.

The participants in this study also identified common relationships when describing their friendships. Consider again Bethany’s description of her friendship with Kiana:

She plays in all the sports I play. We hang out all the time, and we have the same interests We became friends because we both played on the hockey team

together. And I don't know, just because I was hanging around with some of her friends. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

In addition to having common interests (sports) and experiences (hockey team) with Kiana, Bethany had common relationships with some of Kiana's friends.

I asked Lisa to tell me about a time when she wanted to join a group but the girls in the group wouldn't let her. She reflected back to her friendship with Trina. Trina was in a group of girls that included Jessica and Heather.

Well, when my best friend Trina was hanging around the other girl, lots of other girls were hanging around them too. So I wanted to be in that group and I sort of was, but not really I didn't hang around them all the time, and I wanted to hang around them more I was friends with Heather and Jessica but not as good as friends as I was with Trina . . . a lot of my friends were hanging out with them and there wasn't [*sic*] as many people around, so I wanted to be with my friends still. (Lisa, age 12, 2005)

This example also demonstrates common relationships as part of girls' friendships. Lisa was already best friends with Trina, so when Trina established a new group friendship Lisa wanted to be a part of this group as well. The participants also identified common relationships other than those with peers in describing their friendships, as demonstrated by Tamara's description: "Well my parents and her parents got us together and we played and slowly became good friends" (Tamara, age 12, 2005).

Communication

Within the context of established friendships, the interviews suggest that the process of communication plays a role in girls' friendships. Some participants described

how changes in physical distance between them and other girls affected their friendships. Many shared that spending time together was important. As illustrated previously, all of the participants articulated the importance of talking within their friendships.

Communication within girls' friendships seemed to consist of these three components: physical distance, spending time together, and talking. The following example illustrates this idea:

She plays in all the sports I play. We hang out all the time, and we have the same interests We became friends because we both played on the hockey team together. And I don't know, just because I was hanging around with some of her friends I can just tell her everything and she'll be there for me all the time. I love her! (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

Bethany and Kiana were both involved in a hockey team that practiced and had games regularly. These practices reduced the physical distance between the two girls and, in turn, increased the amount of time the two girls spent together. Because these girls attended the same school, the physical distance between the girls decreased, and the time they spent together increased. Additionally, the experiences they shared at hockey gave them something to talk about while at school and again increased the amount of time they spent together. Communication occurred between the two girls, and they established a friendship.

As illustrated by the previous example, the results of this study suggest that school can serve as a space for negotiating friendship. The majority of the friendships described by the participants in this study were established at school. Furthermore, all of the participants in this study, when asked about their group friendships, identified

schoolmates as comprising their group of friends. For example, consider the following example from Lisa:

Pretty much all of the grade 7 girls are friends. I don't like a few of them but I still hang around them Well, they didn't say I don't want to be your friend anymore or anything. They didn't do anything really bad, so I didn't want to be their friend anymore. It's just that we're not best friends. (Lisa, age 12, 2005)

Lisa has a group of girls whom she considers her closest friends among the grade 7 girls. They are Melanie, Shayna, and Tanya. Lisa said, "Pretty much everyone didn't know anyone on the first day, and we all sort of got to know each other and we all sort of became friends" (Lisa, age 12, 2005). In this case, school brought this group of girls together and provided a large amount of time for them to spend together. These girls also shared the same feelings for Melanie and tried to help her get used to being at school. Lisa reported that this experience helped her and Melanie to establish a friendship.

Although all of the participants identified schoolmates as friends, some participants also reported having difficulty establishing friendships at school. Consider the following example from Carly, who started at the school toward the middle of the school year:

So when I was trying to be friends with people in 7B, but then they never liked me back because I was different. 'Cause I talked different from them and stuff like that. And I think different I didn't know things about school, like where something is and stuff like that, and they didn't try to help me or tell me anything Okay, well Melanie, she didn't like me and she was telling Lisa not to be friends with me. Whenever I told them something they would tell people and

they would think it was funny . . . like secrets, I'd tell them and then they would tell other people. (Carly, age 11, 2005)

The above example demonstrates that girls may experience difficulty establishing friendships at school.

The participants in this study also reported difficulties with maintaining their friendships over time. For example, consider the following story told by Tamara:

Well, my neighbour, Paige. We have been friends for a really long time, like almost 6 years we have been friends. She was my neighbour, and last year she moved and I haven't really seen her very much and I really wish I had because I just missed her birthday because I went away. I really want to get closer. I want to be able to play with her and talk to her. Because we had this bridge from our house to their house and we used to play we'd run across each other's yards and jump on our trampoline and she'd come in my pool. It was really fun, and we were really close in the summer and the winter. And now there's nobody in my neighbourhood. Now she lives 20 minutes away from me, so it's not like she can walk over.

(Tamara, age 12, 2005)

In this case, the distance between these two girls increased because Paige moved houses. As a result the two girls were unable to spend as much time together playing and were unable to talk as frequently. Maintaining the friendship became problematic as indicated by Tamara's response: "I really want to get closer. I want to be able to play with her and talk to her" (Tamara, age 12, 2005).

The following example from Bethany serves as further support of the difficulties girls experience in maintaining their friendships over time. Bethany said:

I went on a trip, and then when I came back she was really close with Naveen

I felt excluded, so I didn't really speak or tell her everything Well, because she usually always hangs around with me, and she was hanging around with Naveen.

And it felt like well . . . I don't know, "Does she not want to be friends with me?"

and stuff like that. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

The previous example also illustrates that girls can experience difficulties in maintaining their friendships over time, particularly when there is no communication for a period of time. The difficulties Bethany experienced were demonstrated by her question, "Does she not want to be friends with me?" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). When I asked Bethany to clarify how Kiana was acting, she replied, "Not nice! As soon as she found out that I didn't really know why she was being friends with Naveen, not that that's a bad thing, but I don't know. We were always just good friends and then I was kind of mean and she was like acting mean back" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). I asked Bethany what kind of mean things she and Kiana were doing. She replied, "Just dirty looks and ignoring. You know, that type of stuff" (Bethany, age 12, 2005).

Inclusion and Exclusion

All of the participants in this study described situations of inclusion within their group friendships at school. For example, when asked if she had to do anything to become part of her group of friends Bethany replied, "I would always dress prettier and stuff and buy things that I thought were hip or the trend, then they just started coming up to me and started talking to me" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). When asked the same question, Melanie denied that she had to do anything to become part of her group, saying, "I just acted myself" (Melanie, age 12, 2005). However, she later said, "You give them

things and they say, 'Thank you. You're such a good friend. You didn't have to get me that.' It makes me feel special, like I'm a good person." When I asked her what she did in response to these feelings, she replied, "Be nice back."

The participants in this study also described situations of partial inclusion within their group friendships. To support this idea, consider the following story told by Tamara when I asked her about how her group of friends came together:

Well, Julie and I were already close friends There was [*sic*] only four girls in our class, so it was just a matter of everyone would come play with us. They sort of had to learn how to keep secrets, because the one girl, she really didn't, and she would go and tell everybody. She wouldn't keep secrets. Say if one of us had a crush on someone, she would go tell them or write a note to that boy and put it in his mailbox and stuff like that. (Tamara, age 12, 2005)

I asked Tamara what the other people in the group did in response to this. She replied:

We sort of just ignored her for a while We just ignored her, walked away from her, didn't eat lunch with her. We really just shut her out of the group for a while. Then she came and apologized and said that she would never do it again. Then we let her back in. But after doing that a couple times, we really didn't want to hang around her. (Tamara, age 12, 2005)

The conversations with girls in this study also reflected situations of exclusion from group friendships. The following example from Lisa demonstrates the process of exclusion. I asked Lisa to tell me about a time when some girls tried to keep her out of a group. She told me the following story:

Once I was eating lunch by myself and they were all sitting at a table, and I heard one of the girls say “Lisa’s a loner.” But then when I went and asked people and they said she was talking about some other girl. But I don’t think that was true. So I didn’t like that either . . . Well I wasn’t really sure she was talking about me, but then from what I knew she didn’t know any other Lisa. So then I was sort of angry that she would call me that. I was going to call her to see if she was talking about me, but she wasn’t there. So then I talked to her at school the next day and she said, “I was talking about another Lisa.” (Lisa, age 12, 2005)

Lisa explained this situation further by recalling another situation with these same girls. She said, “Well in other classes I heard my name and I would turn and they would say, ‘Oh were not talking about you.’ But I couldn’t hear the rest of what they said” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). I asked Lisa if she would ask the group about it when it happened. She replied, “Sometimes I did. But all they said was they weren’t talking about me” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). As supported by the previous example, many of the participants in this study reported that girls would deny their bully behaviors when they were confronted. Furthermore, some of the participants, when discussing their same-sex friendships, would justify their own bullying behaviors while condemning the same behavior in others.

At the end of my interview with Bethany, I asked her if there was anything else that she would like to share with me. She shared the following story, which highlights the difficulties that girls experience within her friendships because of exclusion. I include it as a conclusion to this section, because her story captures young adolescent girls’ experiences of exclusion in their same-sex friendships. Bethany said:

I think it would be much easier if everyone could get along, like not worry about how they look or who they're hanging out with and like you can have more than one friend and not be excluded Well, when I was with Naveen, Kiana would always feel excluded because I wouldn't hang out with her as much. And then when I was with Kiana, Naveen would always feel excluded because I wouldn't hang out with her as much. So then there was a whole thing there that made me like, "This is so stupid! We should all three just be like really good friends and hang out with everybody, anyone who we want." So I told them that, and they were like okay, it might work. So that's what we're trying now. We're just trying to be friends with everybody, but I think it's like . . . 'cause now Naveen's hanging out with this girl Chrissy a lot and not hanging out with Kiana a lot. But we're still hanging out with everyone sort of . . . like one week me and Kiana will be close, then the next week me and Naveen, the next week me and Chrissy . . . I don't know. They'll have plans with somebody else and then we'll be like, "Oh, where am I gonna go?" So then we'll call up either Kiana or Naveen and then we'll get together. And we'll be like, we should do this more often, and then we talk and then we basically talk about our old friendships. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

Moral Character Judgments

Bethany, who identified Kiana as her close friend, described their friendship in the following way, "I love it! I can just tell her everything and she'll be there for me all the time. I love her" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). This brief description demonstrates the level of trust that comes from having a close friendship. But how does this trust develop? Lisa, who identified Melanie as her best friend, said, "Well, she just seemed like a person

who needed a friend and she seemed really nice” (Lisa, age 12, 2005). But what does it mean to be nice? Melanie, in describing Julie, whom she considers an acquaintance, said, “She’s so full of it” (Melanie, age 12, 2005). Does this mean that somehow Julie’s words and actions are false or untrue?

The results of this study suggest that within their same-sex dyadic or group friendships, girls refer to the moral character of others, in particular whether they are nice, trustworthy, and truthful. To illustrate girls’ references to moral character, consider the following story from Tamara. When I asked Tamara about her group of friends, she replied:

There’s another new girl that just came to our school. And she’s between Rita’s group and Julie’s group and our group Well actually Julie’s our group and sometimes Melanie’s with me and there’s a couple other girls too Carly would swear a lot, and I didn’t like to be around that very much She’s kind of just hanging around with us now, like she doesn’t swear as much anymore with us. Melanie said, “I won’t hang around you guys anymore if she’s in your group.” Julie and I told her, “Well just come stay awhile and see what happens,” and she just kind of got used to the way things were, like what we did and how we talked She asked me for some money and she said she would pay me back and she did, so she was pretty easy to trust. She just kept going. She just kept trying to come in, and then she would go hang out with her sister. (Tamara, age 12, 2005)

The previous example reflects the characteristic of truthfulness within girls' same-sex friendships. As a further example of girls' references to moral character, consider the following story told by Melanie:

At the beginning of the year there was a girl. Her name is Julie, and she is the worst girl I have ever met pretty much. She is a really bad girl. She talks very bad to people. She calls people names. She makes fun of people behind their backs. She does all the things that I usually don't do. So I will be hanging out with one of my friends and . . . like this one time I came to school and she was like, "Nice purse! Where did you get it?" and I told her where I got it and I said it was clearance sale and stuff. And later on that day the girl that was hanging out with me came back and said, "When you left that girl said, oh my goodness that was such an ugly purse," and doing little things like that. That bothered me but it didn't hang on me for the rest of the day. It didn't ruin my day . . . Well I wouldn't say that we were friends. It was kind of an acquaintance. (Melanie, age 12, 2005)

The above example reflects that the characteristic of niceness is also a common trait in girls' friendships.

The participants in this study also referred to the characteristic of truthfulness within their friendships. For example, Bethany said, "She wasn't always telling me the truth, like about her family problems, and so then I just felt excluded kind of. So then I hanged [*sic*] out with Kiana more, and we got closer and closer" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). I asked Bethany if she wanted the friendship to end and why. She replied, "Well, I was kind of feeling like I don't really know if I really want to . . . like why would I want to be

friends with someone like, they swear and they're just not who I really want to hang out with" (Bethany, age 12, 2005). I asked if anyone did or said anything to make the friendship end. Bethany said, "No, I don't think so. Just her issues that she didn't tell" (Bethany, age 12, 2005).

Power

The participants' responses reflected an emergent theme of power within girls' friendships. In describing how they established group friendships, all of the girls in this study referred to a dyadic friendship leading to a group friendship. To clarify this process, consider the following example from Melanie when I asked her how she became a member of her group:

I think it was because the other girls were hanging out with me. So if I was hanging out with Lisa, and Tamara was kind of hanging out with me, then Tamara would have to come along with Lisa and me, and then just stick together. I guess that's how it happened. I don't really know how the group started, we just all started to talk together, and we're in the same class so that makes it even better People definitely said good things about me. I don't know if they said anything to help me become in that group. They might have brought me up by saying nice things like, "Oh, your grades are so good!" But that's just nice things, not to get into the group. (Melanie, age 12, 2005)

In this example, Melanie had already formed a dyadic friendship with Lisa. She was also in a dyadic friendship with Tamara, and over time the three girls formed a group.

The following example from Bethany also highlights how dyadic friendships can lead to establishing groups:

Well it kind of just happened. I don't know. I started, like in the morning I would always dress prettier and stuff and buy things that I thought were hip or the trend. Then they just start coming up to me and started talking to me . . . plus our sports that we all did. I played hockey and Naveen played hockey and Kiana played hockey. And I was on defensive line with Naveen, and then that's when me and Naveen started to get real close. And then Naveen introduced me to everyone and then it was like a chain from there. She just told [the group] like, "You should meet Bethany. She's really cool," and then they would meet me and they would tell other people Yeah, at school and at the lunch table. She would invite me to sit with her and everyone else is there. So then we would all talk and stuff. [This happened] probably for a couple of weeks, and then I started to get close with other people. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

Because Bethany and Naveen were on the same hockey team they had already established a dyadic friendship. When Naveen introduced Bethany to her group of friends at school, Bethany had the opportunity to establish a group friendship.

The previous example also illustrates that the converse relationship between dyadic and group friendships may also be true. That is, by being a part of a group friendship, girls have the opportunity to establish further dyadic friendships. However, the participants' friendship narratives also illustrate that power struggles can occur when new members are introduced into groups. Consider the events that occurred prior to Bethany being accepted into Naveen's group:

Well, when I first came to [this school] I was like really, really trying to fit in with Naveen and all those people. And then the first time I talked to Naveen I felt like

she was only talking to me to be nice to me because I was new. I would talk to Kiana and other people and they were nicer, but not as nice as other people were. I don't know . . . I felt kind of bad and sad too . . . I would talk to Naveen, and I knew that whatever I said to her, like if I would not like make fun of somebody or talk about somebody like, "Oh look at what she's wearing." Then I knew she would be like telling other people and they would be like, "Naveen told me this," and I would say, "Oh! Why would she do that?" And I don't know. That's when we weren't that good of friends. I was just trying to fit in. Yeah, like she didn't want me to take over being the coolest person in the group or whatever . . . I would always be like, 'Oh hey Naveen' and she would just look at me. [Bethany imitated the look by glancing out of the side of her eyes] and she would just wave [She then gave a brief wave of her fingers to imitate the wave]. So then I thought, "Oh does she not like me? What did I ever do? I didn't say anything mean to her." But I think she just thought I was trying to put on an act and being nice to her just to get in the group . . . then she started to actually get to know me, and then she was trying to get me in the group. I just felt like, "Why? She doesn't even know me like why is she being mean to me and treating me mean?" I thought that if I said anything she would just get mad at me and be like, "I don't know. I've been nice to you." Even though she knows she hasn't. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

In this case, Bethany experienced feelings of sadness, doubt, and uncertainty within her dyadic and group friendships. Additionally, Naveen resorted to behaviors such as ignoring, dirty looks, and mean gestures.

The interview conversations in this study demonstrate that girls are aware of power and conflict within their same-sex friendships. Consider the following story, as told by Bethany, when I asked her about the group of girls that she belonged to at school:

Me, Kiana, Naveen, and Chrissy, we're all like the main group of friends.

There's a girl Allison. She was kind of in it last year, and I think she thought I kind of took her place. So we got in like a conflict. So we didn't really like each other. She always just thought like, you're taking over my spot and all that kind of stuff. And she would say, "You don't act like you're my friend. You act like you're only their friends." And she would always pull me aside and say, "You should really not hang out with them as much," and that kind of stuff . . . Chrissy and the girl Allison, they used to be bestest [*sic*] friends, and when I joined the group she thought like, I took her place. So she was doing everything in her will to try to get in the group. So, I don't know, I think she went through a few rough times and she was being mean to me. And she would always be like, "Why don't you like me? You're not my friend!" and stuff like that . . . Well, then she tried to like become part of a different group that she joined. It was with Deanna, Krista, Tracey, and Asia. And she really tried to make us jealous, but we actually felt happy for her. So she was just, I don't know, "I don't want to be in this group. I want to be in your group and I'm just pretending." And then she told all of this to Naveen because they were all still friends, and then Naveen told it to me. So then we were trying to like include her. But she knew . . . Allison knew that Naveen was telling us everything that Allison told to Naveen . . . When Allison found out that Naveen was telling us everything that she had said she just

flipped out, like she did not want to be any part of our group anymore. She was just mad She was just like, “Naveen, I thought we were friends. I’ve gone through so much with you. Now you’re treating them better than you treat me. I could always tell you my problems and now I don’t have anyone to say it to.”

And then she was like, “these guys are my true friends,” her group that she went to. (Bethany, age 12, 2005)

This example illustrates issues of conflict and power within girls’ friendships. In particular, it demonstrates the use of bullying behaviors within girls’ friendships and the dynamic nature of girls’ friendships.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to identify the bullying behaviors described by the participants in their friendship narratives. This chapter also highlighted the salient features of the girls’ dyadic and group friendships within the context of the six major themes: acceptance, intimacy, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion, moral character judgements, and power. The same-sex friendship narratives presented in this chapter served to connect the bullying behaviors to these major themes. Furthermore, they serve to highlight the complexity of bullying and victimization. Possible explanations for this complexity will be presented in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to explore young adolescent girls' experiences of bullying in their same-sex friendships. By highlighting girls' friendship narratives, this study examined the dynamics of girls' same-sex dyadic and peer group friendships, while providing a safe space for girls' voices to be heard and explored. While the dynamics of girls' friendships have been explored in the research literature (see George & Browne, 2000; Goodwin, 2002; Nilan, 1991), the current body of educational research requires further exploration of the dynamics of girls' relationships, with specific regard to the victimization that may occur in girls' same-sex dyadic friendships and peer groups. The present study was designed to address this gap in the current body of educational research.

Summary

Throughout this qualitative, narrative study, I sought to understand young adolescent girls' experiences of bullying within their same-sex friendships by listening to and retelling their friendship stories. By offering the participants in this study the opportunity to reflect on their friendship experiences without fear of judgment or punishment, I sought to empower young adolescent girls by providing a safe forum for their voices.

My initial interest in the topic of female bullying came from my personal experiences as a middle school teacher overseas. I witnessed firsthand many of the challenges that young adolescent girls experience in their friendships with other girls. As a teacher, I was unable to clearly identify incidents of female bullying among my students. I also lacked the skills to deal with the conflicts created by these situations.

The rationale for this study stemmed from my desire to examine the dynamics of girls' friendships and to understand the nature of female bullying.

A critical review of the relevant research literature related to girls' friendships and bullying was presented in Chapter Two. First, this chapter examined the peer culture of adolescents. Second, girls' friendships and aggression were explored with respect to female bullying. Third, the educational implications of female bullying were discussed. Finally, some conclusions and discussion of the study were offered.

The main research question that was answered in this study was: How do young adolescent girls experience bullying in their same-sex friendships? Stemming from this main question were three supporting questions:

1. How do young adolescent girls establish and maintain their same-sex friendships?
2. What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors characterize young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships?
3. How do young adolescent girls negotiate conflict within their same-sex friendships?

The research methodology of the present study was presented in Chapter Three. This was a qualitative, narrative research study that was conducted in a private, religious school in southern Ontario. Prior to beginning data collection, ethics approval was obtained from both Brock University and the research site.

The participants in this study were 5 girls from two grade 7 classes in the school. They were all either 11 or 12 years of age. Each girl participated in a tape-recorded 30-minute personal interview based on an unstructured interview format. Each tape was

transcribed using my computer's word processor to produce a hardcopy of the interview transcript. Following transcription, each girl participated in a 20-minute member check, where she reviewed the transcript and suggested any clarifications or deletions that needed to be made.

During the first phase of the data analysis process, I reviewed each interview transcript, looking for examples of bullying behaviors as described by the participants. As outlined in Chapter Three, I identified the participants' roles in bullying situations, including being the bully, victim, bystander, or bully-victim (Marini et al., 2004). Additionally, I employed the bullying subtypes outlined by Marini and Dane (2008) to code participants' references to types of bullying behaviors, focusing on the form and the function of the bullying.

During the second phase of the data analysis process, I employed aspects of L. M. Brown and Gilligan's (1992) "Listener's Guide," which they describe as a voice-centred and relational approach to research, to identify common and emerging themes. The Listener's Guide required that I listen to each interview tape at least four times, each time attending to a different question related to the participant's story, voice, sociocultural context, and silence. However, to gain a deep understanding of each story, I actually had to listen to each tape several more times.

In Chapter Four, the results of the study were presented. Based on the first phase of data analysis, the participants in this study assumed roles in all four categories of bullying involvement, including bullies, victims, bystanders, and bully-victims. Additionally, the participants in this study employed more indirect bullying behaviors than direct bullying behaviors. Furthermore, the participants in this study employed

bullying behaviors that were proactive and reactive. During the second phase of data analysis, six major themes emerged from the interview conversations including acceptance, intimacy, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion, moral character judgements, and power. Each theme was described and presented with supporting examples from the data.

Discussion

The purpose of this section is to offer insight into the results of the present study. The results outlined in Chapter Four will be used to address the main and supporting research questions. Additionally, the bullying behaviors and major themes will be positioned and critically discussed within the current body of research literature.

How Do Young Adolescent Girls Experience Bullying Within Their Same-Sex Friendships?

The results of this study support the notion that young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships can be described as both dynamic, in that they continually shift or change over time, and complex, meaning that they involve intricate interactions between various factors (George & Browne, 2000; Nilan, 1991). Based on the participants' friendship narratives, a variety of bullying behaviors were identified within girls' same-sex friendships.

Marini et al. (2004) identify the major participants in bullying: the bully, the victim, the bystander, and the bully-victim. The participants' friendship narratives in this study outlined examples where girls assumed all of the participant roles within their dyadic and group friendships. All of the participants assumed at least 2 different roles within their same-sex friendships, which were the victim and the bystander.

Additionally, 3 participants assumed the role of bully. Marini et al. (2004) also note the emergence of a group of students who are both bullies and victims, called bully-victims. The 3 participants who assumed the role of the bully could also be identified as bully-victims. Thus, the results of this study suggest that girls may be a part of this emerging group, as these 3 participants described situations where they employed bullying behaviors in response to being the victim of bullying from one or a group of friends.

In line with Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes, the results of this study suggest that the form of bullying within young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships is mainly indirect. The participants' friendship narratives described more indirect bullying behaviors than direct bullying behaviors. These results support the findings of Lagerspetz et al. (1988), which suggest that indirect aggression is more typical of females, especially for 11- to 12-year-old school children. These results are also in line with the cross-cultural findings of Osterman et al. (1998), which suggest that indirect aggression is commonly employed by adolescent females in the school setting. Additionally, these results are in line with the findings of Crick and Grotpeter (1995), which suggest that psychological bullying, a form of indirect aggression, increases in 11 to 12-year-olds, particularly among girls. Also in line with Marini and Dane's subtypes, the results of this study suggest that the function of bullying within young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships can be both proactive and reactive. The bullying behaviors described by the participants could be classified as proactive, reactive, or both. The participants in this study employed proactive bullying behavior, involving planned aggression that was reward driven. These behaviors were usually aimed at maintaining intimacy within a dyadic or group friendship. The participants also employed reactive bullying behaviors

in response to being provoked, including behaviors that were defensive or emotional. These reactive behaviors were also usually aimed at maintaining intimacy within a dyadic or group friendship. These results support the work of Salmivalli and Neiminen (2002) who noted that bully-victims employed both proactive and reactive aggression, according to their peers and teachers. As noted previously, 3 of the 5 participants assumed the role of bully-victim within their same-sex friendships, which may explain, in part, the greater number of bullying behaviors that could be classified as both proactive and reactive.

The results of this study point to the possibility that a unique set of bullying behaviors may be employed by girls within their same-sex friendships, although identifying and classifying these behaviors may be difficult due to the complex nature of girls' friendships. The majority of the behaviors described by the participants in this study could be classified as both proactive and reactive. This finding, along with the finding that the participants employed more indirect aggression, lends support to the need for the term "alternative aggressions" as suggested by Simmons (2002). This term refers to the aggressive behaviors girls employ that fall outside the conventional research definitions of aggression. Simmons suggests a need within the body of research for a term that encompasses all typically female forms of aggression. Additionally, these findings lend some support to Archer and Coyne's (2005) suggestion that indirect, relational, and social aggressions are essentially the same form of aggression. However, due to the complexity of bullying as well as the dynamics of girls' friendships, it may be unwise to oversimplify this classification at the risk of minimizing the seriousness of these unique bullying behaviors.

How Do Young Adolescent Girls Establish and Maintain Their Same-Sex Friendships?

The results of this study suggest that young adolescent girls establish and maintain their same-sex friendships through negotiation, inclusion and exclusion, as well as moral character judgements.

Negotiation. The results of this study suggest that young adolescent girls continually negotiate their friendship status with others. Nilan (1991), who analyzed girls' talk during a longitudinal study of adolescent girls' friendship groups, suggests viewing girls' friendships in the following way:

not as a "thing" to be maintained in a way that a well-watered garden is maintained but as an ongoing process of morally-justified negotiation in which the participants constitute and reconstitute between themselves the very nature of the business of being girl friends. (p. 9)

Furthermore, Nilan proposes that friendship between girls can be partly explained as an accomplishment within a mutually understood moral order that is dependent on girls continually demonstrating to each other that they can properly do the moral work of friendship. The results of this study support the work of Nilan by demonstrating that negotiation is indeed an ongoing process within girls' same-sex friendships.

Extending from the work of Nilan (1991), the results of this study offer insight into how girls may begin the process of negotiation. In particular, the results of this study suggest a possible mechanism that allows the process of negotiation to occur. First, a foundation for friendship must be laid. The results of this study suggest that young adolescent girls establish their same-sex friendships based on three general categories: common interests, common experiences, and/or common relationships. Once the

foundation for friendship is established, communication between girls can begin. As previously suggested by Goodwin (2002), talking and listening are important activities for girls, and language is used to establish close friendships. Leckie (1998) suggests that communication appears to be a central aspect of girls' relationships. Therefore, it follows that communication, as demonstrated by the results of this study, is an important aspect of girls' friendships. The results of this study suggest that communication within girls' friendships encompasses three components. First, the physical distance between girls decreases. Second, girls spend time together. Finally, girls talk. Through communication girls have the opportunity to decide if they will establish a friendship.

The results of this study support the idea that once a friendship has been established, changes in any of the components of communication can make it difficult for girls to maintain their friendships. More specifically, changes in the physical distance between girls, the time they spend together, or the amount of talking between them may lead to changes in closeness between girls.

Inclusion and Exclusion. The results of this study suggest that within their same-sex friendships young adolescent girls engage in behaviors that will lead to inclusion in dyads or groups while avoiding behaviors that will lead to exclusion from dyads and groups. This finding is in line with the work of Nilan (1991), who suggests that within their friendships, girls must continually prove to others that they can abide by the mutually understood moral order. Exclusion occurs when a girl's interactions with others break this moral code. Inclusion occurs when a girl is successful in terms of the moral order. Based on this moral code, Nilan concludes that those girls who are included by

peers are “doing” friendship properly and those that are excluded are somehow getting it wrong.

As stated previously, girls have a need for acceptance, which they attempt to satisfy through friendship. The examples outlined in Chapter Four illustrate inclusion according to the mutually understood moral order expressed by Nilan (1991). Based on her desire for friendship, Bethany changed the way she dressed and bought trendy items in hopes of being included in a group of friends. Her behavior can be explained in part by the work of L. M. Brown (2003), who suggests that young adolescent girls spend much of their time and emotional energy trying to behave in ways that will earn them the best labels. Any deviation from their peers’ expectations or, in other words, what is judged by their peers as “normal” or the status quo, can result in exclusion or punishment by the peer group. For example, being too smart or smarter than the smartest member of the group, too fat or fatter than the fattest member of the group, too sexually experienced, or too full of themselves compared to and as labelled by their peers can have disastrous consequences for girls’ friendships (L. M. Brown).

In this case, Bethany’s behavior met the expectations of her peers and she was included in the group friendship. Melanie appeared to be unaware of any change in her behavior to gain inclusion. However, she stated that she was nice to other girls and gave them things. Nilan (1991) suggests that moral order of girls’ friendship pertains to caring, trust, and loyalty. Most notably, the girls in Nilan’s study carried a moral expectation to show caring. Melanie’s behavior is an example of this moral expectation at work. She showed caring by acting nice and giving things to others, and thus, was included in the group.

In line with previous research evidence (L. M. Brown, 2003; Nilan, 1991), the results of this study suggest that certain behaviors, such as betrayal through revealing someone's secrets, can influence how girls are treated within friendship. Tamara's story, as outlined in Chapter Four, illustrates the moral order at work within Tamara's group friendship. It also illustrates how communication can become problematic for a girl who transgresses the group's moral code. In this case, the girl who could not keep secrets was ignored (decreased talking), walked away from (increased physical distance), and left out at lunch time (decreased time spent together). The group members did not tell this girl that she was "breaking the rules"; rather their behavior (ignoring, walking away, excluding) served to inform her of her moral transgressions. Rather than confront this girl directly and tell her that she needed to keep secrets if she wanted to be a part of the group, the group's behavior, which can be classified as social exclusion, served to inform this girl of her limited access to the group. These results support the work of Goodwin (2002), who found that girls formed social alliances against particular individuals to establish exclusiveness in their peer groups. Furthermore, to sanction or punish members of their peer group when they attempted to show themselves better than the others, girls employed various processes of exclusion.

Lisa's story, as outlined in Chapter Four, also demonstrates exclusion within girls' friendships. In examining this example, it is important to first ask one question: Why was Lisa eating lunch by herself? It would seem that she had already been excluded by the rest of the girls. Furthermore, why didn't the group include her when they recognized that she was alone? As suggested by the work of L. M. Brown (2003), it is possible that Lisa's peers had somehow previously judged her behavior as "not normal"

and had labelled her as a loner. This label resulted in Lisa's exclusion or punishment by the peer group through the use of social aggression, specifically ostracizing and whispering.

Lisa reported that when she approached the group of girls to question them about this behavior, they would say that they were talking about someone else. Similarly, many of the participants in this study reported that girls would deny their bully behaviors when they were confronted. Furthermore, some of the participants, when discussing their same-sex friendships, would justify their own bullying behaviors while condemning the same behavior in others. These findings support current perspectives on female aggression which challenge the sugar and spice image of female youth and the notion of the "good girl" (e.g., L. M. Brown, 2003; Lamb, 2001; Simmons, 2002; Underwood, 2003). Furthermore, they may be explained by the work of Brown (1998), who studied anger in working-class girls. Brown suggests that during early adolescence girls are acutely aware of when they are being themselves and when they are assuming the role of the good girl to maintain a relationship or satisfy the expectations of others. They observe and judge in themselves as individuals, as well as in other girls, the hypocrisy of simultaneously taking on the conflicting roles of the good girl and the true self.

Lisa's story can be further explained by Nilan (1991), who states that "the continuous and ever-shifting process of categorization in girls' talk makes visible the dynamic nature of girls' friendship" (p. 9). Nilan explains that both inclusion and exclusion operate through categorization work. In analyzing girls' talk, Nilan interpreted categorization as a dual process of inclusion and exclusion. When girls spoke of another girl or group as belonging to a category other than their own, they created a verbal form

of exclusion. In the case of Lisa, the use of the term “loner” suggested that she was not a part of the group. Nilan concluded that this categorization emphasizes the internal cohesion of the group to which the speaker belongs while simultaneously defining the characteristics of those who do not belong to her group. However, Nilan does not assume that these conventions are universal or cross-cultural, but rather that they are culturally specific and affective in nature. Nilan concludes that the processes of inclusion and exclusion maintain order in the social world of girls. Similarly, Davies (1982) suggests that:

These makings and breakings serve two important functions, first in terms of the maintenance of the orderliness of the children’s world, and second in terms of satisfying their need for exploration and discovery of the dynamics of interpersonal relationships. (p. 68)

Moral character judgements. Research evidence suggests that girls’ friendships are based on a mutually understood moral order based characteristics such as caring, trust, loyalty, fairness, truthfulness, and modesty (B. Davies, 1982; George & Browne, 2000; Lees, 1986; Nilan, 1991). According to L. M. Brown et al. (1999), in early adolescence, girls prefer intense one-on-one relationships and become more concerned with the characteristics or qualities that their friends possess, such as their values and beliefs. In line with this previous research, the results of this study suggest that within their same-sex dyadic or group friendships, girls refer to the moral character of others, in particular whether they are nice, trustworthy, and truthful. As girls are negotiating their friendships by communicating, they are simultaneously judging the moral character of others. As supported by the work of L. M. Brown (2003), the results of this study

demonstrate that if a girl is judged positively, meaning that she is truthful, trustworthy, or nice, she can gain access to dyads and groups. However, if she is judged negatively, meaning she is not truthful, not trustworthy, or not nice, she may be denied access or given only partial access to a dyad or group.

Tamara's story, as outlined in Chapter Four, illustrates this idea. In this case, the new girl, Carly, was initially given marginal status with Tamara and her group because she would swear a lot and the girls judged that behavior negatively. However, as her behavior changed, meaning she didn't swear as much, she was granted greater access to the group. As her behavior came more in line with the girls' positive judgements, her access to the group friendship increased. Additionally, since she paid back the money she had borrowed from Tamara, she was judged as trustworthy and gained increased access to the dyadic friendship with Tamara. When she first arrived at the school, Carly moved between Rita's group and Julie's group. She also would spend time with her sister when she couldn't gain access to these groups. This shows the dynamic and complex nature of girls' same-sex friendships; but more specifically, it demonstrates the dynamic pattern of inclusion and exclusion (see B. Davies, 1982; George & Browne, 2000; Nilan, 1991). Alternatively, Goodwin (2002) concludes that "forms of social exclusion and aggression in girls call into question the notion that girls' groups are fundamentally interested in cooperative interaction and a morality based on the principles of relatedness, care, equity, and responsibility" (p. 411).

What Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors Characterize Young Adolescent Girls' Same-Sex Friendships?

The results of this study suggest that thoughts, feelings, and behaviors associated with acceptance and intimacy characterize young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships.

Acceptance. According to Underwood (2003), during early adolescence the role of the peer group increases in importance, as children strongly value acceptance by their peers. As a result, young adolescents engage in more behaviors (both prosocial and antisocial) that show conformity to the expectations of their peers. The results of this study support Underwood's findings, in that the participants identified a need for acceptance in themselves and others, which they attempted to satisfy through friendships with other girls. Additionally, some of the participants described behaviors which they employed in order to "fit in." According to Underwood, conformity helps adolescents gain acceptance from their peers, and acceptance, in turn, helps them maintain control over the changes in their emotional and social worlds.

Savin-Williams and Berndt (1990) characterized close friendships as "the most rewarding and satisfying of all human relationships" (p. 277). As demonstrated in Chapter Four, all of the participants in this study were able to identify positive aspects of satisfying their need for acceptance, such as happiness or feeling wanted as a friend. However, for the girls in this study, satisfying this need was not without cost. All of the participants were also able to articulate negative aspects of their dyadic and group friendships, such as feeling of uncertainty, hurt, and sadness. For example, Lisa had to deal with spending time with people she didn't really like or feel very close to because they were a part of her larger group of friends. However, she also was able to experience

positive feelings as a result of being accepted by and feeling close to her smaller group of close friends. While L. M. Brown et al. (1999) suggest that positive experiences of friendship and peer relations greatly influence cognitive, social, and moral development as well as psychosocial adjustment, these findings support the notion that a different, more problematic side of friendship exists (Berndt, 1982; L. M. Brown, 2003; Hartup, 1983; Lagerspetz et al., 1988). These findings point to the complexity of girls' same-sex friendships.

Intimacy. Previous research suggests that a central feature of adolescent girls' friendships is intimacy (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; L. M. Brown, 2003; L. M. Brown et al., 1999) and that intimate friendships first arise in early adolescence (see Berndt, 1982 for a review). According to Sullivan (1953), intimacy refers to all features of a friendship that make it seem close or intense. In line with these findings, the results of this study suggest that intimacy is a component of young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships.

In line with Sullivan's (1953) definition of intimacy, the results of this study suggest that one of the features that make girls' friendships seem close or intense may be the terms they use to describe their friendships. As outlined in Chapter Four, the participants in this study used a variety of terms to describe their friendships. These terms included acquaintance, friend, good friend, close friend, best friend, and true friend. L. M. Brown (2003) asserts that labelling or categorizing peers gives young adolescents a sense of control in the midst of trying to decipher the mixed messages sent by the culture. Because adolescent girls become increasingly concerned with the qualities of their friends, such as their beliefs and values, as they grow older (Youniss & Smollar, 1985), and because the culture tends to label girls as good or bad in terms of adhering to gender

expectations, young adolescent girls seem more vulnerable to this labelling by their peers (L. M. Brown).

It is important to note that the intimacy or relative closeness between individuals based on these labels appears to be highly subjective, being heavily dependent on individual perceptions. Therefore, the terms employed by one girl may be markedly different from those used by another, even if they are describing the same friendship. For example, as outlined in Chapter Four, it is interesting to note that Melanie described Lisa as a “close friend” or “friend,” while Lisa considered Melanie to be her “best friend.” The two girls may have held similar views on the level of intimacy of their relationship; however, they assigned different labels to their friendship.

Also in line with Sullivan’s (1953) definition of intimacy, the results of this study suggest that time may be another feature that makes girls’ friendship seem close or intense. The participants referred to intimacy and time in many of their dyadic and group friendships. Additionally, their stories indicated that the level of intimacy in their friendships changed over time. For example, based on the terms used to describe the friendships, the intimacy between Tamara and her best friend was different from the intimacy between her and Melanie. Tamara used different terms to describe each relationship based on the amount of time she had been friends with each girl. Thus, it would appear that these terms assist girls in differentiating between relative levels of intimacy within their friendships.

Sullivan (1953) suggests that intimacy encompasses two related but distinct aspects. The first aspect is intimate self-disclosure, which involves sharing personal or private thoughts and feelings with friends. The second aspect is actual knowledge of a

friend's personal and private information. The results of this study support Sullivan's notion of self-disclosure as part of intimacy, as the participants identified being able to talk and share secrets as one of the main reasons they enjoyed having a close dyadic friendship.

Furthermore, all of the participants in this study were able to identify things they talked about with their close or best friends. This finding supports the work of Goodwin (2002), who studied the language practices in preadolescent girls' (10–12 years old) peer groups. Goodwin notes that for girls, talking is an important activity and language is used to establish close friendships.

Based on the examples outlined in Chapter Four, it appears that when young adolescent girls share secrets or their "true feelings" with each other, intimacy increases. The examples outlined in the previous chapter also support the converse relationship between disclosure and intimacy, that is, betrayal or lack of disclosure decreases intimacy. More specifically, when young adolescent girls divulge the secrets of others or fail to share their true feelings, intimacy decreases.

How Do Young Adolescent Girls Negotiate Conflict Within Their Same-sex Friendships?

The results of this study illustrate that power imbalances occur within girls' same-sex friendships and that these imbalances create power struggles, which vary in nature and, while they are not limited to situations of conflict, seem to occur most frequently in these particular situations. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that young adolescent girls appear to respond to power imbalances, including those created by conflict, by relinquishing their individual power and silencing their own voices, thereby assuming the voices of others. One of the key characteristics of bullying is the power

imbalance that exists between the victim and the victimizer (Marini et al., 2004).

Therefore, with regard to girls' friendships, these power imbalances warrant exploration because, as suggested by L. M. Brown (1998), relying on more subtle relational forms of aggression is a way for girls to downplay their desire for personal and social power, which culturally prescribed notions of femininity deny them.

The results of this study somewhat support Duncan and Owen-Smith's (2006) hypothesis that powerlessness was associated with the use of indirect aggression. They defined powerlessness as someone having anxiety about his or her friendship status. The results of this study suggest that power imbalances and thus powerlessness occur within girls' dyadic and group friendships. Additionally, the participants in this study employed more indirect aggression than direct aggression. Duncan and Owen-Smith found that lack of power within same-gender friendships was associated with increased use of indirect aggression. The presence of power imbalances and indirect aggression within girls' friendships in the present study lends support to the researchers' hypothesis.

A central feature of adolescent girls' friendships is intimacy (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; L. M. Brown, et al., 1999). However, intimacy is not without cost, as girls cannot enjoy the intimacy of friendship without choosing between being themselves and meeting the expectations of others. The results of this study support the existence of a dualism between a girl's desire for intimacy and her power as an individual. As emphasized by L. M. Brown (2003), "girls are pressed to give up their own voices in the service of others or to align with a dominant culture that effaces or renders marginal their cultural values and experiences" (p. 104). Young adolescent girls have a need for acceptance, which drives them to seek out friendships (Underwood, 2003). They also have a strong desire

for intimacy, which they try to satisfy by establishing close, dyadic and group friendships with other girls (L. M. Brown et al., 1999). At the same time, young adolescent girls, because of their stage of socioemotional development, also want to find ways to explore and establish their power as individuals (L. M. Brown). The dualism created by these two opposing desires creates ambivalence in girls and may be so strong that girls are willing to give up a measure of power in order to gain access to friendships. Brown suggests that girls relinquish their voices and personal power, choosing to care about relationship and avoid conflict, in exchange for the intimacy and security of friendship.

Within the friendship narratives of the participants in this study, the power imbalances that silenced girls' voices were quite subtle and seemed to occur most frequently in situations of conflict with girls' same-sex friendships. Simmons (2002) suggests that girls are actively engaged in a struggle to voice their fear, sadness, and anger in the face of the pressure to conform to a culture that devalues and dismisses their feelings. As a result, girls may suppress their true feelings, keeping their voices silent and choosing not to speak up so as not to jeopardize their relationships with others. L. M. Brown and Gilligan (1992) identify "the tyranny of the nice and kind" which forces girls to publicly express only those aspects of girlhood that people expect, such as being cooperative, kind and good. These ideas may explain the pattern of silence in the participants' friendship narratives.

Lisa's story, as outlined in Chapter Four, illustrates how girls may give up their own voices and allow others to dictate what their voices should say. In this case, Lisa appeared to be friends with the other girls in grade 7 at the school because she kept silent about her true feelings. Why would she be friends with girls whom she doesn't like?

Why would she still hang around them? It seems that Lisa kept silent about her own feelings towards some of the grade 7 girls and accepted the feelings of the group as a whole. Additionally, none of the girls in grade 7 told Lisa that they did not want to be her friend anymore. Thus, the silence of other girls also contributed to all of the grade 7 girls forming one friendship group.

Carly's story also highlights the relationship between power and silence within girls' same-sex friendships. Although Carly reported that she felt bullied by her classmates and experienced negative feelings, she didn't do anything about it. Carly did not try to assert her individual power within the group but instead accepted the group's voice and went to play somewhere else. She eventually joined another group of girls that disliked the group who rejected Carly. Carly would listen as her new group would talk about the other girls. Carly's silence, through listening and not speaking, demonstrates how a girl's voice can be replaced or masked by the voices of others.

The results of this study suggest that dyadic friendships may provide an opportunity for girls to gain access to group friendships because they mitigate the power imbalance between outsiders and those who are already in the group by allowing the process of communication to occur between the outsider and the group. L. M. Brown (2003) suggests that finding a peer group and fitting in may be the most important achievement of early adolescents. Furthermore, Brown states that "having a safe place or home in a social scene saturated with possibilities, anxieties, and daily flux offers girls a sense of security and power" (p. 104). A girl who has a dyadic friendship may be able to gain access to the group to which her friend belongs because she can talk with the group via her friend. As previously stated, talking is an important activity for girls, and

language is used to establish close friendships (Goodwin, 2002). Furthermore, Leckie (1998) suggests that communication appears to be a central aspect of girls' relationships. Thus, it follows that communication may be the vehicle that mitigates any power imbalance between the outsider and those already in the group.

Implications of Findings

The findings of the present study offered implications for theory, practice, and future research. It was hoped that this study would extend the current body of educational research, provide insight into my own educational practice that could be shared with others, and offer suggestions for future areas of research.

Implications for Theory

Although the dynamics of girls' friendships have been explored in the research literature (see George & Browne, 2000; Goodwin, 2002; Nilan, 1991), the current body of educational research requires further exploration of the dynamics of girls' relationships, with specific regard to the victimization that may occur in girls' same-sex dyadic and group friendships. The present study addresses this gap in the literature by providing further insight into the dynamics of girls' friendship.

First, this study demonstrates a duality within girls' friendships with regard to bullying. Bullying is a negative side of friendship. Within their dyadic and group friendships, the participants in this study experienced such bullying behaviors as name-calling, social exclusion, mean gestures, and dirty looks. The presence of these behaviors within girls' friendships suggests that a dualism exists between the positive aspects of friendship, such as intimacy and acceptance, and the negative aspects, such as bullying. Additionally, this study demonstrates the duality of girls within their same-sex

friendships. All of the participants in this study assumed at least two of the participant roles in bullying situations. Three of the 5 participants in this study assumed the role of the bully-victim within their same-sex dyadic and group friendships at school. Therefore, this study demonstrates that girls may assume various bullying participant roles within their friendships. Within girls' same-sex friendships, the existence of indirect aggression to a greater degree and direct aggression, to a lesser degree was demonstrated by the results of this study. The use of these subtypes of aggression suggests that a negative side to friendship may exist and point to the complexity of girls' same-sex friendships.

Second, the major themes outlined in this study, including acceptance, intimacy, negotiation, inclusion and exclusion, moral character judgements, and power, suggest some of the salient features of girls' same-sex dyadic and group friendships. Additionally, the visual framework suggested in this study offers further insight into the possible interactions between these salient features.

Within educational research, there is a lack of studies that examine bullying within the context of girls' friendships. Developmentalists have examined girls' emotions and behavior within their same-sex friendships (e.g., L. M. Brown, 2003; Goodwin, 2002). Crick and Nelson (2002) suggest the importance of research focused on victimization in dyadic peer relationships, such as friendship, because these contexts may ameliorate or exacerbate a victimized child's vulnerabilities, particularly given the importance that girls place on establishing close, dyadic friendships in middle childhood. By identifying bullying behaviors within girls' same-sex dyadic and group friendships and classifying them using Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes, this study adds strength to the current body of female aggression research. Furthermore, it addresses the gap in

educational research by examining bullying within the context of girls' dyadic and group friendship.

This study also demonstrates the importance and success of the qualitative research approach and narrative research design with regard to female bullying. By attending to the voices of girls, this study was able to produce findings based on firsthand lived experiences of girls' friendships and was able to capture the richness of qualitative inquiry through the use of narrative. Additionally, this study utilized a variety of definitions of aggression based on the current body of literature; thus, a clearer picture of the nature of female aggression emerged. Through the use of narrative and personal interviews, this study also provided a safe space where girls' voices and stories regarding their friendship experiences, both positive and negative, could be explored and legitimated.

Implications for Practice

The present study carries implications for my personal practice, as well as the professional practice of various stakeholders within education.

Implications for personal practice. One of the main reasons that I began this research journey was my desire to respond to some of the frustrations I experienced as a new teacher with regard to female bullying. This desire has continued through the various stages of my professional career as I have moved from teaching overseas to teaching in Canada and as I have progressed from a new to veteran to designated teacher. This desire has also grown and taken on new meaning for me over the course of this research journey, as I have assumed new roles in my life including aunt, wife, and soon-to-be mother. When I tried to speak out against female bullying, my voice was ignored

and I was unable to break the silence. By pursuing graduate studies and embarking on this research journey, a space where my own voice could be heard has been created. I will never be satisfied with the “girls will be girls” response to female bullying that is often typical of my colleagues, parents, coaches, and administrators. This research journey has allowed me to address some of my personal observations and questions with regard to girls’ friendships and female bullying. Through examining the stories of the participants in this study, I have been forced to reflect on my past experiences with friendships when I was a young adolescent girl. This research journey has also made me more aware of the prevalence of female bullying in the day-to-day interactions of girls within the classroom and on the playground. If nothing else, I am now a better listener and feel that I have the capacity to understand the difficulties and affect change in the lives of my students with regard to female bullying and friendships. I will continue to provide a safe space where the voices of my female students can be heard and legitimated. By allowing girls to reflect on the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that characterize their friendships and the ways in which they handle conflict within their same-sex friendships, it is my hope that I will continue to bring increased social awareness to the issue of female bullying.

Implications for professional practice. The findings of this study carry potential benefits for many educational stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and parents.

First, this study provides educational stakeholders with a firsthand understanding of girls’ experiences of bullying within their same-sex friendships. This knowledge can inform the professional practice of teachers and administrators by giving them insight

into the emotional and psychological lives of their female students, which has direct implications for teaching practice based on the Ontario Physical Education Curriculum, Grades 1 to 8 within the healthy living strand (Ministry of Education and Training, 1998). Firsthand knowledge of girls' friendship experiences at school may help parents to understand the types of bullying in which their daughters may be involved by giving them insight into the roles girls assume in bullying, the bullying behaviors they employ, and the thoughts and feelings they experience within their friendships.

Second, this study extends the current body of knowledge with respect to the dynamics of girls' same-sex dyadic and group friendships. In particular, this study identifies some of the salient features of girls' friendships through discussion of the major themes with respect to the current body of research. This information is important to all educational stakeholders because it may aid the development of proactive conflict resolution strategies that better fit the need of girls within their same-sex friendships. These conflict resolution strategies could become a part of the healthy living strand within the Health and Physical Education curriculum. Additionally, a greater understanding of the dynamics of girls' friendships may carry implications for the development of character education programs, in particular, character education programs such as Girl Talk and Project Go that focus specifically on adolescent girls. By using the findings of this study, these programs may be better equipped to improve girls' emotional literacy focusing on the positive character traits that are displayed within girls' same-sex dyadic and group friendships while addressing the difficulties that girls may experience within their friendships. Educational stakeholders may be able to create

programs which promote healthy emotional relationships and improve interpersonal and intrapersonal competence among girls.

Third, the findings of this study carry particular significance for all educational stakeholders in light of provincial legislation, including the Safe Schools Act (Ministry of Education and Training, 2000) and Bill 212 (Ministry Of Education And Training, 2007), an act to amend the Education Act in respect of behavior, discipline, and safety. This legislation emphasizes the seriousness of bullying issues both inside and outside of the school. It also provides principals with the authority to investigate and administer discipline for behaviors that affect the psychological and emotional well-being of the students within their schools. In light of these legislative changes, it is my hope that this study will emphasize the importance of addressing bullying behaviors and provide educational stakeholders with a deeper understanding of the types of bullying within girls' friendships.

Implications for Future Research

The present study was a small-scale, qualitative, narrative study that examined the friendship narratives of 5 grade 7 girls from one private, religious school in southern Ontario. This study was conducted in at a particular time, in a particular school, with a limited number of participants. Therefore, the results are bounded by time, space, person, and place. Additional research is needed to explore the dynamics of girls' friendships and female bullying on a larger scale and across different settings.

This study utilized Marini and Dane's (2008) bullying subtypes to classify the form and function of the bullying behaviors described in the participants' friendship narratives. The bullying participant roles described by Marini et al. (2004) were used to

assess the involvement of the participants in bullying situations within their friendships. The findings of this study suggest that young adolescent girls are involved in bullying in all participant roles within their dyadic and peer group friendships, including bullies, victims, bystanders, and bully-victims. Marini et al. also note the emergence of a group of students, who are both bullies and victims, called bully-victims. The findings of this study suggest that within their same-sex friendships girls may be a part of this group, as 3 of the 5 participants described situations where they employed bullying behaviors in response to being a victim of bullying from one or a group of friends. Further investigation into the role and prevalence of girls as bully-victims within their same-sex friendships is required.

Based on Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes, this study also suggests that bullying behaviors within young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships are mainly indirect in their mode of attack, including behaviors such as dirty looks, ignoring, mean gestures, and whispering. Although these results are in line with past cross-cultural research (Lagerspetz et al., 1988; Osterman et al., 1998), further research into female bullying within schools from a Canadian perspective is required.

Additional research is also necessary because the scope of this study was limited to girls' same-sex dyadic and group friendships at a period in girls' development where research suggests that friendships with the opposite sex increase (see Connelly et al., 1999). Using Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes, this study classified bullying behaviors within girls' same-sex friendships. However, the same model could be used to classify bullying behaviors within girls' opposite-sex friendships. Do girls engage in the same types of bullying behaviors in their friendships with boys as they do with girls? To

answer this question, a comparative study exploring the differences in bullying behaviors between boys and girls within their same-sex and opposite-sex friendships may be necessary.

This study was also limited because it explored bullying within the friendship narratives of young adolescent girls, specifically 11- and 12-year-old girls. The dynamics of girls' friendships, as identified by the major themes in this study, are limited to this age group. How do the bullying experiences of girls change as they mature physically, psychologically, socially, and emotionally? To answer this question, a longitudinal study exploring female bullying within the developmental trajectories across the lifespan may be necessary. This research would be particularly useful because it may provide insight into the effects of female bullying within girls' same-sex friendships beginning in early childhood and continuing into adulthood.

Within the body of research on female aggression, many terms have been used to refer to the behaviors that have been characterized as female bullying (see Bjorkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kaukiainen, 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Galen & Underwood, 1997). Simmons (2002), in her popular work on female bullying entitled *Odd Girl Out*, suggests a need within the body of research for a term that encompasses all typically female forms of aggression and sets them apart from typically male forms of aggression. To focus her analysis, Simmons took the three subtypes of aggression most common in females (relational, indirect, and social) and classified them under one term: alternative aggressions. This study attempted to provide a clear understanding of the direct versus indirect subtype of aggression so that specific bullying behaviors within girls' friendships could be clearly identified. However, in using Marini and Dane's (2008) subtypes to

classify the function of bullying, the complexity of female bullying became apparent as many of the behaviors described in the participants' narratives could be described as both proactive and reactive. Thus, Simmons's suggestion requires further investigation, as a term that encompasses all typically female forms of aggression may oversimplify and minimize these bullying behaviors.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

As stated in the previous section, this was a small-scale, narrative study involving 5 participants that examined the friendship experiences of 5 grade 7 girls from one private, religious school in southern Ontario. This study was conducted in a particular time, in a particular school, with a limited number of participants. Therefore, the results are bounded by time, space, person, and place. Any findings cannot be extrapolated beyond the confines of this study.

This study was also limited in that it examined girls' experiences of bullying within their friendships by attending only to the voices of girls. No parent, teacher, administrator, coach, or any other adult voices were used as sources of information. While the voices of these others are important to the overall picture of girls' friendship and female bullying, accounts from adults regarding girls' experiences of friendship would be skewed by their position or relationship to the girls. Within the scope of this study, I considered the participants to be the experts or gatekeepers to the direct experiences of young adolescent girls' same-sex friendship; thus their voices were most important to me as the researcher.

This study assumed language competency across all of the participants. Due to the linguistic skills required to participate in an interview and the requirements of

narrative research that the richness or detailed account of a story be preserved, all of the participants in this study were assumed to possess competency in English as their first language. Thus a delimitation of this study was that participants were selected only if they had competency in spoken English.

As a researcher, I acknowledged my personal experiences with friendship and bullying that may have entered this study. Particularly because my interest in this topic was based on my personal experiences as a teacher, the way in which I listened to the participants and analyzed their stories was influenced by my perceptions. As the researcher, I tried to remain objective during the interview sessions by encouraging girls to explore both the positive and negative aspects of their friendships. I also tried to keep my responses to their stories as neutral and consistent as possible. This was extremely difficult for me because, in my role as a teacher, I try to encourage children when they are excited about a situation or comfort them when they are upset about a situation. The results of this study may be influenced by perceptions as the researcher.

Responses from the participants in this study may have been influenced by social desirability. That is, many behaviors common in female bullying, such as spreading false rumors and gossiping, are considered to be socially unacceptable. Thus participants may have been less likely to admit to these behaviors. Although I felt that the participants' responses were truthful when describing both their positive and negative experiences, as the researcher and an adult, they may still have viewed me as an authority figure and may have adjusted their responses to reflect a more positive image of themselves.

Additionally, this study was conducted in a private religious school; therefore, the

participants' responses may have been influenced by a desire to adhere to the school rules or fear of being disciplined for breaking the school's code of conduct.

This study was limited in that it examined the same-sex friendships of girls at a time when evidence suggests that girls' opposite-sex friendships may increase in number (see Connelly et al., 1999). Although victimization in girls' opposite-sex friendships warrants examination, for the purposes of this study I chose to focus on girls' friendships with each other because they were of more interest to me as the researcher. This study was delimited in that only the same-sex dyadic and group friendships of girls were included.

Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative, narrative study was to explore young adolescent girls' experiences of bullying in their same-sex friendships. By exploring girls' friendship narratives, this study examined the dynamics of girls' same-sex dyadic and peer group friendships while providing a safe space for girls' voices to be heard and developed. While the dynamics of girls' friendships have been explored in the research literature (see George & Browne, 2000; Goodwin, 2002; Nilan, 1991), the current body of educational research required further exploration of the dynamics of girls' relationships, with specific regard to the victimization that may occur in girls' same-sex, dyadic friendships and peer groups. This study was designed to address this gap in the current body of educational research.

The data collection, data analysis, and the presentation of the findings were all guided by the following main and supporting research questions:

How do young adolescent girls experience bullying in their same-sex friendships?

How do young adolescent girls establish and maintain their same-sex friendships?

What thoughts, feelings, and behaviors characterize young adolescent girls' same-sex friendships?

How do young adolescent girls negotiate conflict within their same-sex friendships?

The findings of this study suggested that within their same-sex friendships girls are involved in bullying as bullies, victims, bystanders, and bully-victims. The findings of this study also suggested that within their same-sex friendships, young adolescent girls use more indirect aggression than direct aggression and that their bullying behaviors are both proactive and reactive in function. The findings of this study also identified six major themes or salient features within the dynamics of girls' same-sex friendships, including acceptance, intimacy, negotiation, inclusion/exclusion, moral character judgements, and power.

A main goal of this study was to provide a safe space for the voices of girls to be heard and legitimated. Overall, I hope that this study provided such a space for the participants and that the value of their stories will be recognized by the reader and hold a place of importance in the current body of educational research.

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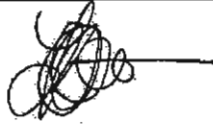
DATE: November 15, 2004

FROM: Linda Rose-Krasnor, Chair
Research Ethics Board (REB)

TO: Sandra Bosacki, Education
Sajah FOX

FILE: 04-051 - FOX

TITLE: Bullying in the Same-sex Friendships of Young Adolescent Girls



The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as Clarified

This project has been approved for the period of **November 15, 2004** to **March 01, 2005** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The approval may be extended upon request. *The study may now proceed.*

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html to complete the appropriate form *REB-03 (2001) Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application*.

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form *REB-02 (2001) Continuing Review/Final Report* is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence

Appendix B
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol:

Study: Bullying in the Friendships of Preadolescent Girls

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Interviewee:

Position of Interviewee:

Opening Script:

Hi [insert name]. Thanks for meeting with me today. My name is Sajah and I have asked you here today so that we can have a conversation about Grade seven girls' friendships, what they talk about, how they spend time together, and how they treat each other.

As a part of my research I want to find out about some of the experiences you may have had with your friends at school. You are the expert on being an 11- or 12-year-old girl in grade 7, so I look forward to listening to your stories and learning from you. I need you to help me remember what it is like to be your age and to teach me about what girls go through in Grade seven.

I will be recording our discussion on tape and I will be making notes as we go along. I want you to know that your participation in this session today is completely voluntary. This means that you don't have to participate if you don't want to, even if your parents have agreed to let you participate. Do you understand what I mean?

[Pause for agreement and to answer any questions]

Also, this is not schoolwork. Your name will not be included on any reports. What we talk about today will not be graded and will not appear on your report card. Do you understand what I mean?

[Pause for agreement and to answer any questions]

You also need to understand that anything we discuss in this session is confidential. This means that I will not tell your parents, teachers, or your classmates anything you say here. However, you should know that if you tell me about anything that suggests your health or safety is in danger, I have to tell your teacher and/or your principal about it. Do you understand what I mean by this? Do you have any questions about what we are going to do?

[Pause for agreement and to answer any questions]

Are you willing to participate?

[Wait for verbal assent]

Well, thank you for your participation.

[Start tape recorder]

Questions:

1. Can you tell me about one close friendship that you have with another girl?

(**ALTERNATIVES:** Can you tell me about someone you know who is a friend to a girl your age? Can you imagine how a girl your age might think of another girl who is her friend?)

a) How and why did you become friends?

b) What do the two of you do together or talk about?

c) How long have you been friends?

d) How does having this friendship make you feel?

e) Was there ever a time when you stopped being friends? If so, why?

f) How often have you stopped being friends?

2. Can you tell me about a time when you had a close friendship with another girl break up or end?

(**ALTERNATIVES:** Can you tell me about someone you know who had a friendship with another girl break up? Can you imagine how a girl your age might feel if a close friendship with another girl broke up?)

- a) Why did the friendship end?
- b) Did you want the friendship to end? Why?
- c) Did you or anyone else do or say anything to make the friendship end? If so, what? For how long?
- d) Did you or anyone else do or say anything to stop the friendship from ending? If so, what? For how long?
- e) When the friendship ended, how did you feel?

3. Girls sometimes have a few friends or a particular group that they spend time with at school. Can you tell me about the group of friends that you belong to?

(ALTERNATIVES: Can you tell me about a girl your age who belongs to a group of friends? Can you imagine how a girl your age might describe her group of friends?)

a) Why did you want to be a part of this group?

b) How does being part of your group make you feel?

c) Did you have to do anything to become a member of your group? If so, what?

d) Did anyone in the group do or say anything to help you join the group? If so, what did they do? For how long?

e) How did this make you feel? What did you do in response?

4. Can you tell me about a time when you wanted to become friends with a group of girls but the girls in the group wouldn't let you?

(ALTERNATIVES: Can you tell me about a girl your age that wanted to belong to a group of friends? Can you imagine how a girl your age might describe a group of friends that she wanted to belong to?)

- a) Why did you want to be a part of this group?
- b) Were you friends with anyone in the group?
- c) Did anyone in the group do or say anything to stop you from joining the group? If so, what? For how long?
- d) How did this make you feel? What did you do in response?

5. Can you tell me about a time when you were part of a group and the other girls wanted to stop being friends with you and wanted you to leave their group?

(ALTERNATIVES: Can you tell me about a girl your age that belonged to a group of friends who wanted to stop being friends with her and wanted her to leave the group? Can you imagine how a girl your age might describe a group of friends that wanted to stop being friends with her and wanted her to leave the group?)

- a) Did you or anyone else do or say anything to make the girls in your group want you to leave?

- b) Did you or anyone else do or say anything to stop the girls in your group from wanting you to leave?

- c) How did you feel when you found out that your friends wanted you to leave the group? What did you do in response?

Closing Script:

Well, [insert name] we have talked about a lot of things today. Is there something that we have talked about that you would like to tell me more about?

Is there anything different that you would like to share with me?

I want to explain to you what is going to happen next. The next time we meet I will bring a summary of what we discussed today. We will talk about the main points in your stories and you can make sure that I understand you correctly. If there is anything that you would like to change or leave out of your story, then you can let me know at our next meeting. I want to thank you again for your participation today. I have learned a lot from listening to you. I'll see you next time.

[Stop tape recorder]